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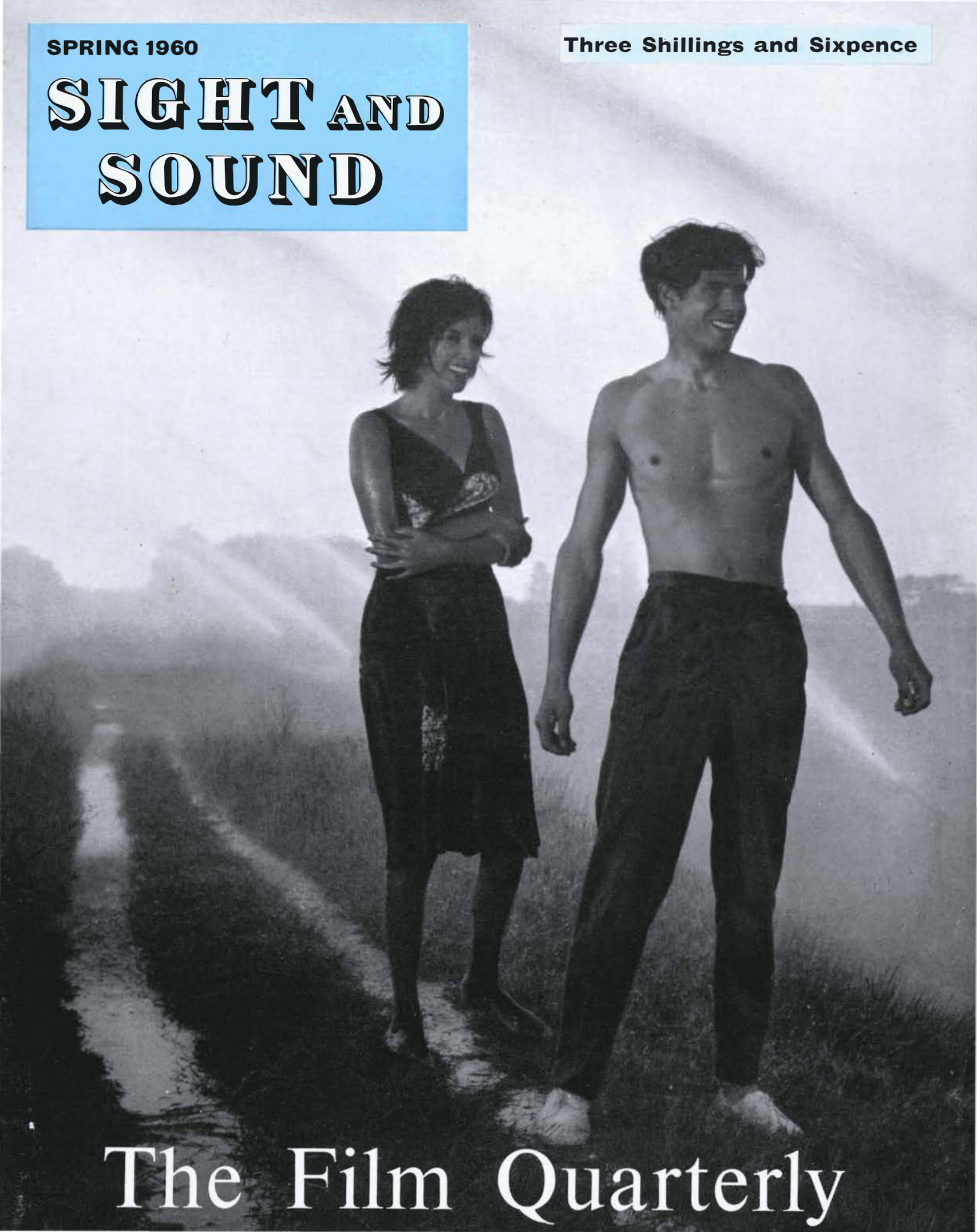

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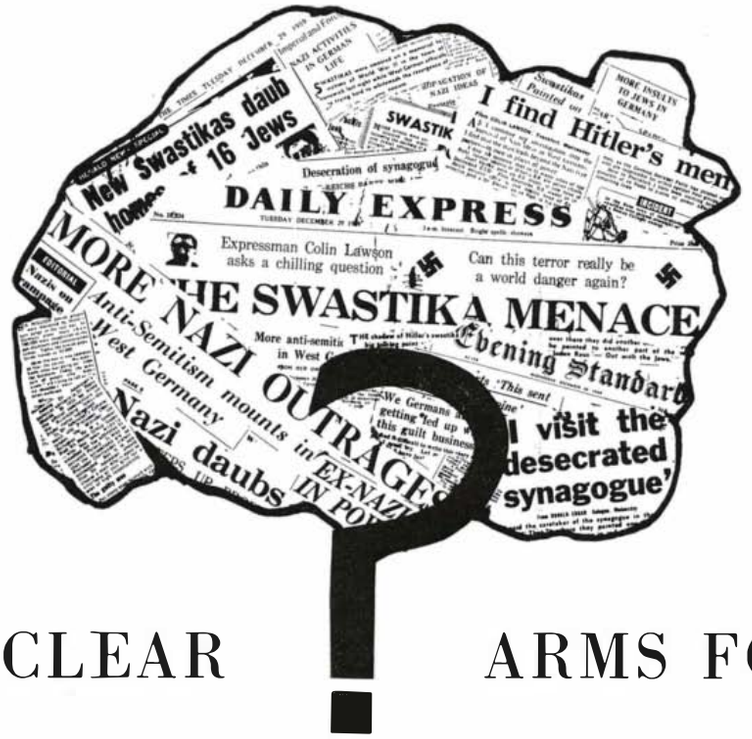

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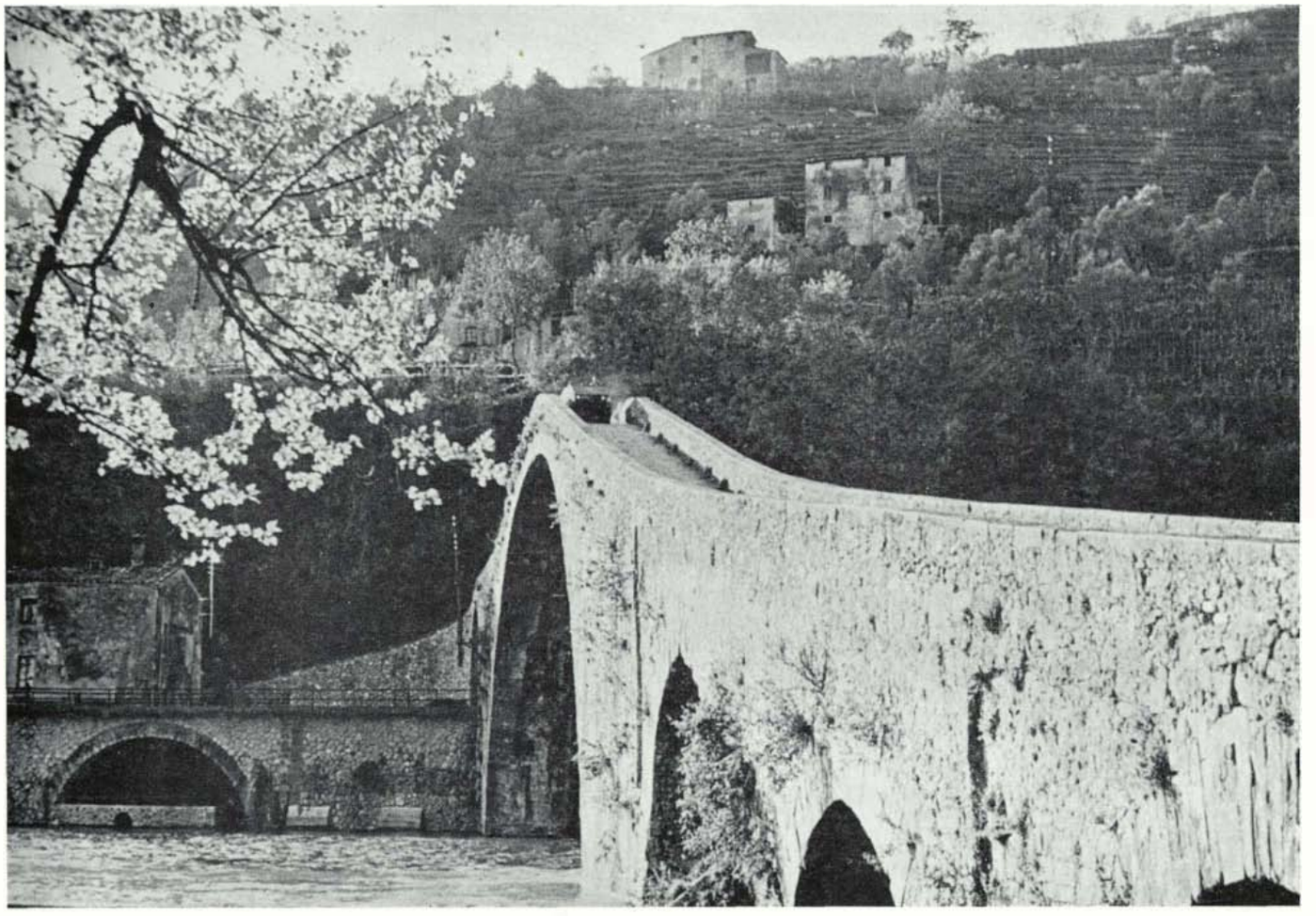

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SIGHT AND SOUND

The International Film Quarterly

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Early location scenes for *Sons and Lovers*, which Jack Cardiff is directing from a script by Gavin Lambert, were filmed in the Eastwood district of Nottingham where D. H. Lawrence grew up. Left: Dean Stockwell (Paul), Wendy Hiller and William Lucas. Below: Jack Cardiff and the art director, Tom Morahan, survey a Nottingham street. Others in the cast include Trevor Howard (as Morel), Mary Ure and Heather Sears; the production is by Jerry Wald, for Fox.

SONS AND LOVERS

photographs by
Thomas Picton

THE FRONT PAGE

THE BEST-KNOWN AMONG LONDON'S specialised cinemas have their established atmospheres: Mayfair comfort and eclectic programming at the Curzon; fashion-forming at the Academy; useful catching-up seasons at the Everyman. Recently, a company rather less predictable in its policy has built up a sort of inner circuit of specialised cinemas. From two houses in Tottenham Court Road (mammoth double bills; continental sex), through the strategically sited Cinephone, to the Royal at Marble Arch and the cultural outpost of the International Film Theatre in Westbourne Grove, Gala's little chain now extends across London. The specialised cinema means profits as well as prestige; the minority audience is a fast growing and important one.

Gala's latest project may be interpreted as a gesture of faith in the specialised audience or as an unusually ingenious venture in film marketing. For two days a week one of the five cinemas now operates as a members' club. If the experiment works, the cinema may be run on a permanent club basis; later, specialised cinemas outside London may join the scheme—which, it is stressed, Gala would operate in conjunction with any exhibitor. Within a week or so of the first enrolment, the club is reported to have acquired about 2,000 members at a guinea a head.

What are the members paying for? Clearly there would be no point in showing films for which there are already commercial outlets; nor is a commercial firm likely to concern itself with defiantly uncommercial product. The answer arrived at by Kenneth Rive, Gala's managing director, and Frank Hazell, former general manager of the National Film Theatre, is so obvious that one is only surprised no one has considered it before. Clubs escape censorship; they can show films banned by the censor, or complete versions of cut films; and, interestingly enough, they can do so in a kind of friendly alliance with the censor himself. Mr. John Trevelyan, Secretary of the BBFC, cherishes his reputation for liberalism. He regrets that the Board could not pass a film like *The Wild One*, with which the club opened; he agrees that it can be seen without risk of contamination by a restricted audience; he himself was invited along to introduce the proceedings.

A classic case of what foreigners like to call British hypocrisy, or a sensible compromise? In any case, one is likely to be reminded of a rather similar venture a few years ago in the theatre. The New Watergate Theatre Club largely devoted itself to American plays banned from public performances. Two consequences followed: the supply of worthwhile banned plays dried up rather quickly; and theatre censorship was relaxed. The hypothetical question of what might happen if large numbers of specialised cinemas took to the club idea, with widespread by-passing of the censor, does not disturb Mr. Trevelyan. In a general way, he holds, censorship acts as a kind of buffer between industry and public; for the protection of both it will be retained.

The idea behind the Gala venture seems to merit support: anything which shows constructive imagination on the part of the exhibition side of the industry, which affords the prospect that more good films will be imported, should be encouraged. If the clubs achieve a substantial membership, resources from membership revenue should be fairly considerable; and part of this money, we are told, will go towards bringing in the less commercial type of film.

But it would be naive to pretend that the greater good of the British filmgoer is the only consideration at stake. Looking through the list of the club's first six screenings, we find *The Wild One*, which certainly at long last deserves its showing, *Camp of Violence*, which is new, Spanish, and according to one trade review "carries violence to the point of sadism," and four revivals. *Razzia sur la Chnouff* and *La Neige était Sale* are both French crime stories which ran into a fair degree of censor hazard. *Quiet Flows the Don*, however, sacrificed only one tiny scene of violence, while cuts in *The Savage Eye* amounted to a little over half a minute. Audiences who happen already to have seen these two films, and who go along again in hopes of catching sensations previously concealed from them, are in for a severe let down.

Much as we criticise the cutting of films of real quality, the cuts themselves often amount to only a few seconds or minutes; nor are there many among the eight or nine films banned each year by the censor which can be regarded as anything but trash. If Gala wants the sensation-seekers, it no doubt knows how to find them. If, as its prospectus states, it wants to "foster the development of the art of motion pictures," the club's first list of programmes invites us to reserve comment. Just possibly, it might achieve both. In any event the experiment will be watched with interest, both for the audiences acquired and the way the clubs set about acquiring them.

A Writers' Wave?

DEREK HILL

drawings by JOHN HARMER

WHENEVER A VALLEY OF depression in the British film industry has lengthened into a trough, blame has been directed against a shortage of capable writers. But the old excuse has now become invalid, with a suddenness so untypical that it has left even the people most directly concerned hardly aware of the scale of the change of scene. During the past year or two, a new generation of successful playwrights and novelists has been brought into the cinema; and they find themselves working in unhampered conditions which a few years ago would have been thought impossible. Simultaneously, some established writers within the industry have been forming their own production groups in order to gain more control over the treatment of their work.

A list of the current and forthcoming work of the new writers makes exciting reading. John Osborne, fresh from *The Entertainer*, is planning an original screenplay. Alan Sillitoe has completed his adaptation of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* in collaboration with Karel Reisz, who will direct. Arnold Wesker is planning an original love story "on the impossibility of the ivory tower situation", provisionally called *The Diary*, for Tony Richardson, as well as an original film musical about the construction of a children's playground and an adaptation of his play *The Kitchen* for direction by Lindsay Anderson.

Peter Shaffer's adaptation of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is announced for direction by Peter Brook. Alun Owen follows his screenplay of *The Concrete Jungle* with an adaptation of his television play *No Trams to Lime Street*. John Mortimer is adapting the novel *Act of Mercy*. Willis Hall, after collaborating with Wolf Mankowitz on the script of *The Long and the Short and the Tall*, has completed *The Lifeboat Story* and is working on another original for the screen.

Mankowitz himself has set up his own production group and plans to produce one film a year. Recently, he admits, he has been "less careful than usual" about the kind of material he's been working on in order to win his eventual independence. "It's the only way," he said. Bryan Forbes has formed his own company in collaboration with Richard Attenborough, and is sure that he could not have seen *The Angry Silence*, his first script for the group, produced as he wanted by any other company.

* * *

Talking to the newcomers to screen writing, I found that each seemed conscious of enjoying a respect which the industry has certainly not extended to writers in the past. Only two years ago, Wolf Mankowitz had told me: "The writer is very much at the bottom of the so-called creative pyramid. This means that he is not only the foundation stone but also the crushed, mangled body beneath the whole charabanc . . . If the director is also the producer, then the writer is virtually his serf. Performers also feel that they have control over the scripts these days, and if it comes to a showdown the director would rather lose his writer than his star . . . If a writer thinks a film adaptation—even his own adaptation—of his work will follow the original, then he just does not know the film business.*" And Jill Craigie concluded, "Most novelists and playwrights put their best work into their novels and plays and accept film contracts just for the money,

*In *Books and Art*, February, 1958

though they still try to turn out craftsmanlike scripts."

Today Mankowitz and every other writer I spoke to agreed that his own position bore little relation to this depressing picture, though few of them seemed aware of just how widespread the change had been. Only Willis Hall was firm. "It's a general pattern," he said, "not just individual instances." And the eagerness with which the writers are being sought by the industry confirms this. Arnold Wesker and Alun Owen have each turned down offers of three adaptations. Owen mentioned that he had been asked to work on a super-spectacle of the life of St. Patrick: "which shows," he said, "that they're learning the lesson of getting someone like Christopher Fry to work on *Ben-Hur*."

Owen felt that any new improvement in the writer's lot was due entirely to television. "A writer can go where he likes for work now," he said. "When the B.B.C. told me that I couldn't have a love scene in a Liverpool accent in *No Trams to Lime Street*, I still had several alternative television markets. Today a writer can make a living writing what he wants to write, and producers are waking up to the fact that they need us."

Other reasons quoted for the industry's new concern with writers included the success of such American television playwrights as Paddy Chayefsky and Reginald Rose, the box-office returns of *Room at the Top*, and a desire to latch on to the new movement in the British theatre, the Royal Court and Theatre Workshop successes. But can this coincidence of pressures towards greater opportunities for film writers lead to an equally vital movement in the cinema? What, in fact, are the chances of a British "new wave" being brought about by young writers rather than by directors?

The obstacles to the writer exerting any real influence in the cinema are enormous. Virtually every contract gives the producer and director the right to make any alterations they want to a completed screenplay. The only exceptions to this have been Shaw and Paddy Chayefsky. *Marty* was such a low budget production that Chayefsky was allowed to write his own clause into the contract giving himself the final word over revisions to his script. Understandably, writers fresh from the theatre and novels keenly resent the general lack of such a clause in their own contracts. Few, though, would go as far as Arnold Wesker, who told me: "I would refuse to sell the screen rights of any of my plays unless I had control over the final script, the choice of director and cast and, if possible, the publicity."

John Whiting, a playwright who has been put to work by the cinema on subjects which suggest little knowledge of or even interest in the strength of his plays, disagreed. "The cinema is not the writer's medium," he said. "How can the writer get control? Is he to sit at the director's side and scream every time there's an attempt to cut a line from his script? Is he to be at the editor's elbow making sure that no dialogue vanishes during cutting? Writers find it hard to believe, but the intention in altering their work is not to wreck it, however often that happens to be the result . . ."

"What does a writer know about publicity?" asked Bryan Forbes. "Maybe some advertising gets people in for the wrong reasons—but if it gets them in, surely that's something? As for casting, who knows what John Braine thought when Simone Signoret was chosen for *Room at the Top?*

"But the writer should certainly have re-write control. The industry still believes that if one writer is good seven writers must be seven times as good. And if you're being paid, say, a hundred a week to re-write someone else's script, it's only human to show that you're earning the money by re-writing extensively, even if you happen to think the script is pretty good as it stands. So you start by altering the names of a few of the characters . . ."

For *The Concrete Jungle*, Alun Owen was brought in on casting to help check that the Liverpool, Irish and Welsh accents were as accurate as his script demanded. Alan Sillitoe, on the other hand, was not consulted at all during the casting of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning.*

* * *

For all their interest in the new writers, producers still tend to think in terms of getting them to work on adaptations, usually of their own work but sometimes on that of other authors whose connection with their own qualities is mysterious. Arnold Wesker's first film work was an adaptation of Ted Willis's television play *Hot Summer Night*. "I did it for three reasons," said Wesker. "To put the worst first, I needed the money—£1,500. Then the subject—a trade unionist's reaction to colour prejudice in his own home—interested me very

Above: Alun Owen. Right: Arnold Wesker.

much; and I wanted the experience of writing a screenplay." But after Wesker had done two draft treatments, Ted Willis decided to prepare the shooting script himself. "I'd never work on an adaptation of someone else's work again," Wesker said.

Some writers have found, they told me, that even the adaptation of their own work for the screen acts as an interruption to their creative development. Alan Sillitoe described how, writing the screenplay of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, he had to try to recapture the mood out of which the novel was written; a problem made more difficult by his certainty that *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, which he had written since, represented a considerable advance on the earlier book. The great thing, he said, was the time he had been able to devote to the script—almost a year. And yet, during this time, he could have written another novel. He felt that basically it wasn't a good thing for novelists to adapt their own work, although preparing this script had taught him several things about his novel which he hadn't realised before. Playwrights were probably better suited to writing for the screen. He was adamant about refusing to adapt other writers' work. "I feel I must work from my own strength," he said.

John Osborne, too, emphasised the problem of re-creating a work for another medium. "It can be such a terrible waste of time," he said. "It's got nothing to do with whether or not you like writing for the cinema—it's just that it holds you up. The reason that we asked Nigel Kneale to adapt *Look Back in Anger* was that I had become so bored with it—I felt that I just couldn't go back again. *The Entertainer*, though, is largely my own adaptation."

While seventy per cent. of a film's cost continues to be put up by its distribution company, few chances of experiment on small budget productions are likely to come the writer's way. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* will cost rather more than £100,000; no established stars will be used, and it is considered a cheap production. But it will still cost more than twice what François Truffaut has recommended as a "new wave" feature budget. The success of the low budget films in France seems to have made little impression on distributors in this country. "I shouldn't think they've even heard of the new wave," said Osborne gloomily. "It's far easier to find £500,000 for a film than £50,000, simply because half a million buys all the things the distributors consider a good investment, starting with top stars."

It may even be that British distributors have been taking note not of recent developments in France but of the virtual disappearance of the small-scale American television adaptation, which not long ago seemed about to lead Hollywood into a new and rewarding pattern of production. This startling collapse has never been satisfactorily analysed or explained, although one argument—that the films remained too entrenched in the Hollywood production routine, and were not made cheaply enough to ensure the profits needed to encourage similar investment—seems convincing.

Significantly, the two British writers who have formed their own companies both felt that little could be gained from low budget production. "I'm fighting underbudgeting all the time," said Wolf Mankowitz. "It usually means that you can't cover your subject in the detail you want; it always shows in the finished film." And Bryan Forbes felt that attacks on the star system were pointless. More people will pay to see top stars than will pay to see unknowns, he insisted, so why shouldn't a film's backers expect the big names? Willis Hall pointed out that writers suffered when attempts to set up low budget productions fell through, since contracts often stipulated that full payment for the script would only be made when production had begun. "A writer can find himself working for three months, all for an advance of £150," he commented.

Truffaut has attributed the success of the "new wave" to a kind of evolution on the part of three groups: distributors, public and critics. Without all three being prepared for the younger film-makers, he told me during a visit to London, the directors could never have broken through. The British scene hardly seems similarly set to receive whatever worthwhile native productions do get made; and it is difficult to imagine much enthusiasm for anything fresh being shown by the tired and disinterested who have a majority voice in criticism. "However unconscious it may be," said Sillitoe, "critics aren't going to welcome anything which challenges the standards of the society which gives them their bread and butter. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was well received by the book critics, but that was because its Nottingham setting was so far from their own experience that I might as well have been writing about Istanbul."

Perhaps, though, the critical reaction is the least important. The fight for vitality in the theatre has persisted and shows every sign of triumphing despite the baffled opposition of many of the critics; and the cinema generally speaking is surely less dependent on reviews.

* * *

Any consideration of weaknesses in the writer's position must allow for the attitude of the writers themselves; and it would be misleading to suggest that all of them are eager to concentrate on screenplays. Sillitoe, with two or three new novels in mind, believes that no writer can predict in advance the medium in which he will eventually specialise. Alun Owen admits to having "no real interest in movies." He hadn't been to the cinema for five years or so except to see *Beloved Infidel*, "and that was because I was in the second feature." He

Above: Alan Sillitoe.

would never abandon television writing for films, for his main enthusiasm is for patterns of speech. "Television can make a virtue of words," he said. "You can sustain a ten-minute duologue on television, but concentrated dialogue is far more difficult in the cinema. Did you see *Beloved Infidel*?"

Arnold Wesker seems the most enthusiastic among the new screenwriters, though he stresses that he hasn't yet discovered for himself whether or not he has the talent for it. He attended the London School of Film Technique for six months long before he wrote his first play. "I wanted to direct from my own original scripts—like everybody else at the school," he said. "The cinema was my first love. One ambition which I'd love to try when I'm—how can I say—fuller as a person would be a film of the life of Christ showing him as a product of Jewish society rather than as the founder of Christian society." Wesker has little eagerness to write for television, though he did submit his play *The Kitchen* to every television company. They all rejected it, but asked for it back after the success of *Roots*. He refused. "The trouble with television," he commented, "is the spirit in which it's viewed. There's a different play every night, always part of a continuous programme. I don't see how you can achieve the same impact as in the cinema or the theatre."

John Whiting, who has always been ambitious to direct from his own originals, believes on the other hand that today's writers should be able to create for every medium. "Each offers its own opportunities," he said. "Television makes up for the theatre's dearth of short plays. But the cinema's the place for social realism, not the theatre. The theatre's such a pudding!"

* * *

The writer's position is still, of course, subordinate; and with the concentration on adaptations, the absence of opportunity for experiment on low budget productions, a lack of wide critical encouragement and an understandable reluctance on the part of several writers to specialise in screenplays, the advances that are being made might not seem spectacular. But again and again the impression I received of unprecedented activity seemed matched by an atmosphere of exciting and equally unprecedented freedom. Only Alan Sillitoe spoke of any sense of restriction. Censorship, he complained, would make certain key passages of his novel impossible to put on to the screen, and in his adaptation he had been forced to skirt round them. "There's no point in wasting your time putting in what you know will be cut out."

Mankowitz and Forbes, though, both felt that this attitude was mistaken. "Everything you'd like to go in should appear in the screenplay," said Mankowitz, "and then you can fight over it later if you have to. I've got a scene between a prostitute and a sadist in *Streetwalker*, and I think I'll get it through. But in *The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll* they made me take out a fight between a mastiff and a midget, although it was quite authentic for the period."

Alun Owen declared that the only time he had been asked to compromise on a script was when his play *Progress to the Park* was directed by Lindsay Anderson for a Sunday night performance at the Royal Court. George Devine wanted him to remove some Ulstermen references in case the audience couldn't understand them, and Anderson wanted him to make a reference to venereal disease more explicit. "But now," said Owen, "I've *had* the one-night stands at the Court, and I've *had* the amateurs. I'm moving in with the professionals."

Owen's script for *The Concrete Jungle* was written for another new company, headed by Joseph Losey in collaboration with Stanley Baker. It is clearly from such independent groups that most of the new opportunities for writers from other media are coming. One common experience is that the mystique of writing for films, the industry's cherished insistence that the technique takes years of apprenticeship and experience, is completely groundless. Owen worked closely with Joseph Losey, who simply advised him to describe everything that he wanted to be seen. Sillitoe was given a copy of the script of *Look Back in Anger* to study before beginning work on his own screenplay. "Story and dialogue—if you can tackle those that's all you need," said Willis Hall. Mankowitz stated that he has yet to write either a treatment or a shot by shot shooting script. "I write everything as a story first, then as a kind of continuity, showing the breakdown of scenes, and finally as a master scene script, though rewriting and polishing goes on until and even during production," he said. "No director would work

Left: Bryan Forbes. Above: Wolf Mankowitz.

from a script that indicated camera movements and angles—he'd feel insulted." Forbes confirmed this. "I *do* write a detailed shooting script," he said, "but only because I've carefully explained to the director that I happen to work best this way and that I'm not trying to direct the film for him. Even so, I've had two or three scripts torn up by directors who've still felt offended."

In the past, playwrights who have been brought into films have frequently been given hopelessly unsuitable subjects to script. The names of Denis Cannan and John Whiting were mentioned more than once, and there were some headshakings about Arnold Wesker working on *Hot Summer Night*. Whiting himself complained that the real trouble was not so much the work he was given as the fact that four scripts out of five—invariably the best, he implied—were never made. "I grew so depressed working on scripts I knew would never be produced that I asked Pinewood to send me along a comedy," he said. "That's how I came to work with Bryan Forbes on *The Captain's Table*."

Mankowitz felt that there was little likelihood now of producers trying to get successful writers for the sake of their names and then using them inappropriately. "First, no writer's name sells a film; second, these writers you're talking about are tough, puritanical boys. They can take care of themselves. Look at Arnold Wesker refusing to collect his *Evening Standard* award as the year's most promising playwright. You mustn't imagine these characters are white virgins about to be sold to Rio de Janeiro. Personally, I've only once worked on a film I didn't want to do, and that was when I needed the money. It was an old pals sort of thing and I made sure I didn't get a credit."

Mankowitz was the only writer I met who expressed a preference for adaptations rather than originals. "You need the stuff you can't use in adapting a novel or play, he said, "because it all helps strengthen what you do use." But the rest felt that the need for originals was one of the cinema's most urgent problems. Sillitoe quoted Kurosawa's work as an example of what original screenwriting could achieve. Wesker was delighted to have been asked to write an original by Tony Richardson: "He said he was getting tired of adaptations and wanted a film with next to no dialogue."

John Whiting mentioned that his play *Marching Song* had actually started life as a film script. "If anyone were to adapt any of my plays I wouldn't try any of this 'Don't tamper with my deathless prose' nonsense," he commented. "I'd advise them to throw it straight out of the window and only use the germ of the idea and develop it in film terms. But originals are what's really needed."

The difficulties confronting the younger writers are lightened by their sense of liberty, their discovery that screenwriting technicalities are something of a myth, by the sympathetic attitude of the new independent companies, their own determination to work solely on subjects which attract them, and a common eagerness to see a more widespread use of originals. Perhaps this can never add up to a writers' cinema. Chayefsky, after all, is virtually the only writer who has ever dominated the screen to the extent of making the director of his films seem unimportant. In any case, though more civilised treatment of the writer and his work was desperately overdue, a new wave of writers unsupported by an equally sturdy movement of directors could lead to some shocking anti-climaxes.

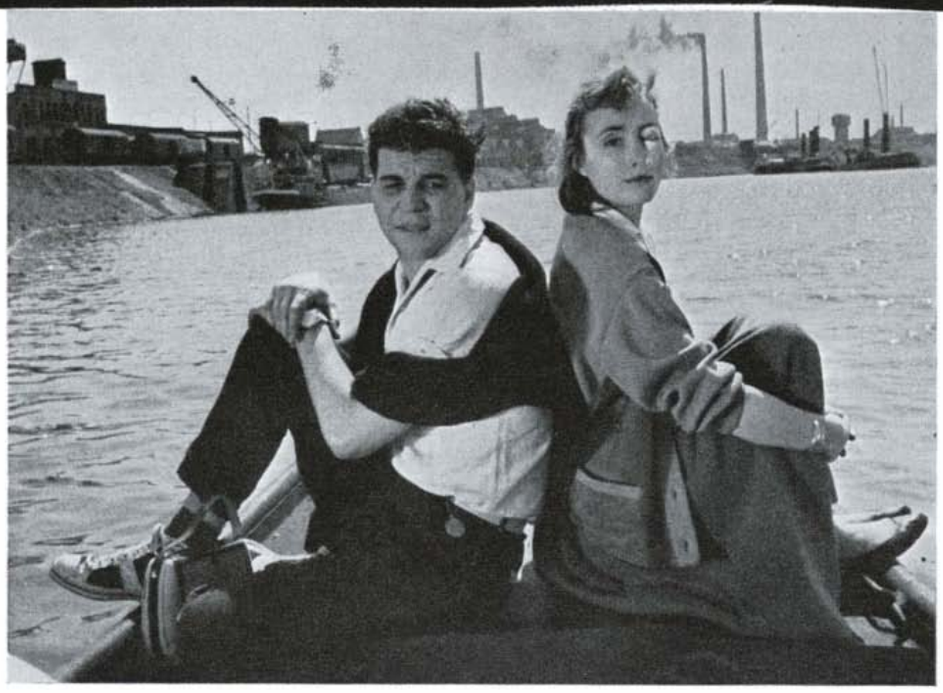
What does seem particularly hopeful in the present situation is the teaming of such talents as Osborne and Richardson, Sillitoe and Reisz, Wesker and Anderson, perhaps Owen and Losey. If such a balance can be maintained the transplanting of playwrights and novelists could very well succeed. It is, after all, the first real attempt by the industry to make use of native literary talent on any really considerable scale. As Arnold Wesker commented, "The MacNeices and Spenders were never approached by the cinema. The nearest thing that happened in the past was Auden's commentary for *Night Mail* . . ."

Above: Willis Hall. Left: John Whiting.

YOUTH and the CINEMA

(2) Candid Camera

by PETER JOHN DYER

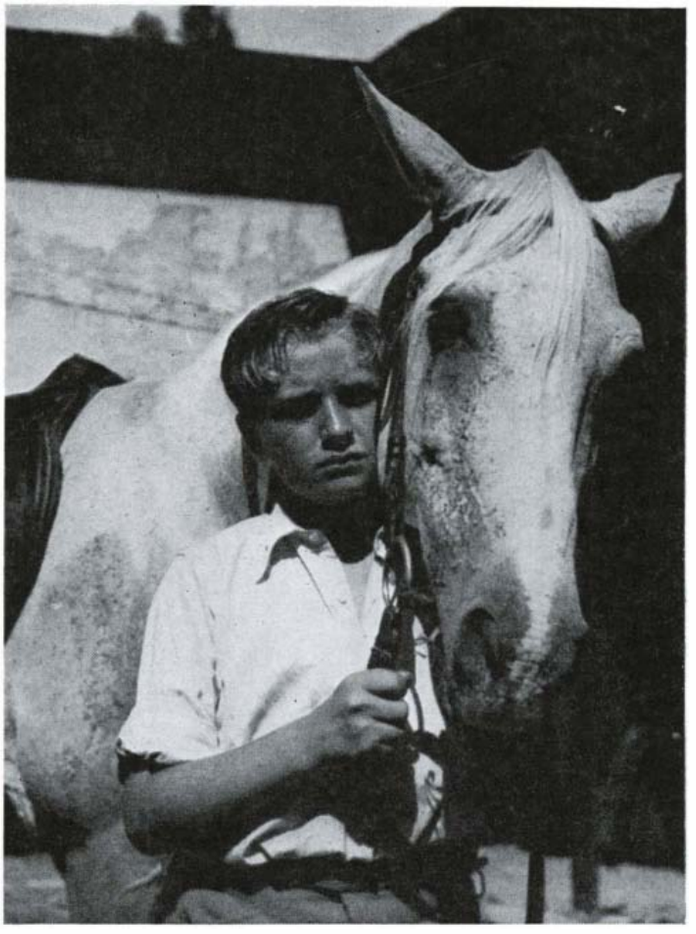


Above. Hollywood influence: the gang mystique. Hervé Bromberger's "Les Loups dans la Bergerie". Below. Documentary influence: factory worker and fiancée. Bernhard Wicki's "Warum sind sie gegen uns ?"

This second article on the cinema's approach to today's younger generation surveys the European scene and Hollywood's influence upon it; and traces, in particular, post-war trends in France.

IN WESTERN EUROPE there is no country where society seems more stable than the Netherlands. There, if anywhere, one would not expect to find "the teenage problem". Yet, last summer, Amsterdam's police were baton-charging long-haired, leather-jacketed gangs of *nozem* (a handsome lad lacking intelligence or morals) as they roared around the city's central square on revved up motor-cycles, scaring tourists, heckling prostitutes, chasing girls and disrupting traffic. *Nozempie kijken* (watching the *nozem*) became a popular evening pastime in Amsterdam.

That same summer, in Paris, a group of boys between fourteen and twenty set out to meet a rival gang. Unable to track their opponents down, they took their revenge on passers-by and shop-windows. A similar thing happened in Bandol, where cafés were ransacked and customers manhandled.



Working class reality: René Wheeler's " Les Premières Armes ".

The events in Holland were ascribed by the Reverend Rijnders, a young Amsterdam clergyman who had recently studied delinquency in America, to illiteracy, overcrowded housing due to war damage, an influx of Indonesian refugees and the boys' almost total lack of interest in anything outside the cinema. In France, where the tempo of life is faster and a journalist's catch-phrase has more immediate impact than a sociologist's report, the trouble-makers of Bandol and Paris were dubbed *blousons de cuir*, and a little later *blousons noirs*. Like Teddy boy in England and *stilyagi* (the stylish ones) in Russia, the term stuck.

An organised gang must, as a symbol of status, have its uniform. Thus your Central Harlem youngster, if he wants you to think him the cool, cultured, beat-the-rap type, will go in for grey flannel suits, regimentally striped neckties and a tightly rolled umbrella with a gold, goose-neck handle—rather like Henry Silva's teenage drug-pedlar in *A Hatful of Rain*. The *stilyagi* affect drape-shape coats reaching down to the knees, wear their hair like Johnny Weissmuller and call their girl friends Jane. The *nozem* and the *blousons noirs* favour Brando's motor-cycle kit or James Dean's nylon windcheater from *Rebel*. There is probably hardly a teenage cult or sect in the cinema-going world whose style of dress isn't influenced, to some extent, by the American cinema.

Although the phenomenon of world-wide adolescent revolt may express itself, in part, in Hollywood-inspired styles and crazes, its actual causes will differ from country to country and town to town. In Poland, for instance, it is youthful upheaval against an oppressive ideology that has produced the curious blend of *jeunesse dorée* and street boy, typified by Zbygniew Cybulski and Tadeusz Janczar; in the Argentine, in Torre Nilsson's *Fin de Fiesta*, political, moral, religious and family tyranny has produced much the same kind of James Dean hero; in Germany's *Die Halbstarken*, the gang-leader (Horst Buchholz) is depicted as a child of divorce, reacting against the dreary materialism and comfort of the *Wirtschaftswunder* by wearing leather trousers, dancing rock 'n 'roll and organising a hold-up.

Whether one likes it or not, the movement from sometimes utterly dissimilar causes (poverty, wealth; repression, unrestricted freedom) towards the effect of a stereotyped global culture-pattern has become an inescapable fact. It is inescapable because the cinema, and especially the American cinema, has led the other media of mass-communication in producing a culture controlled by feed-back. A vast transmitting apparatus, interposed between the film producer and his audience, feeds him back information through box-office ratings regarding the type of star, music, story and theme that the public wants. And what the feed-back reveals is that the public wants much the same all over the film-going world.

As a result, you get a James Dean star springing up within a few years of Dean's death in Poland, West Germany, England (David McCallum) and France (Gérard Blain); a James Dean fan club in Paris which meets once a month at the *Flèche d'Or* in the Rue du Faubourg-St. Martin; and you get a reflection of American teenage hysteria in the recent newspaper report of two German students, bent on joining Dean, throwing themselves to their death from a window.

The cinema, reflecting a social reality, deriving its inspiration from a series of latent social factors, is sometimes as unscrupulous, confused or uninformed about those factors as the public it is addressing. (One example only: the ugly and only too deliberate resolution of Lewis Gilbert's *Cosh Boy*, with the strap—that indestructible British panacea for crime—kept in reserve until the very last minute, thus inviting pent-up emotions to rally to each other's cheer call before pouring, gratified, out of the cinema.) But even when a film is clearly and admirably bent on resisting the condonation of violence, even when its thesis is that violence can only beget violence, as in *The Wild One*, it will evidently still run the risk of inspiring emulation; at any rate in Amsterdam. Almost alone, among American stars, Brando and Dean managed to idealise the character of the Young Rebel. Their clothes, and their influence, percolated across the porous frontiers of the Fifties, leading to the next step in the global stereotyping process; the manufacture of prefabricated answers, in the studios of France and Britain, Germany and Italy, to the emotional needs (gauged by feed-back control) of Europe's teenagers.

2

Whereas Germany's *Die Halbstarken* (1956) and Britain's *My Teenage Daughter* (1955) cashed in almost immediately on the *réclame* of Hollywood's Dean-and-delinquency phase, France resisted the temptation to do likewise until very recently. Certainly there have been isolated French films on juvenile delinquency—Cayatte's *Avant le déluge* (1954), Hossein's *Pardonnez nos offences* (1956), Carné's *Les Tricheurs* (1958)—but nothing approaching a commercial cycle (the first two films listed failed at the box-office); nothing one would describe as being modelled on the Hollywood product. Last year, however, the year of the *blousons noirs*, a whole series of films about juvenile crime was rushed on to the conveyor belt. The fact that they owed their inspiration as much to the success of *Les Tricheurs* as to the recent outbreaks of hooliganism at Bandol and in the St-Lambert district of Paris, widely and generally sensationally reported in the French press, does not preclude the possibility of their being Hollywood-influenced. Their subjects, singly, are indigenous, local; but their content is questionable, their aim and the reputation of their directors frankly commercial, and their effect, taken as a whole, can only be roughly equivalent to that produced by a year's output of American-International variations on *The Wild One*.

Before discussing these films further, it is worth looking back

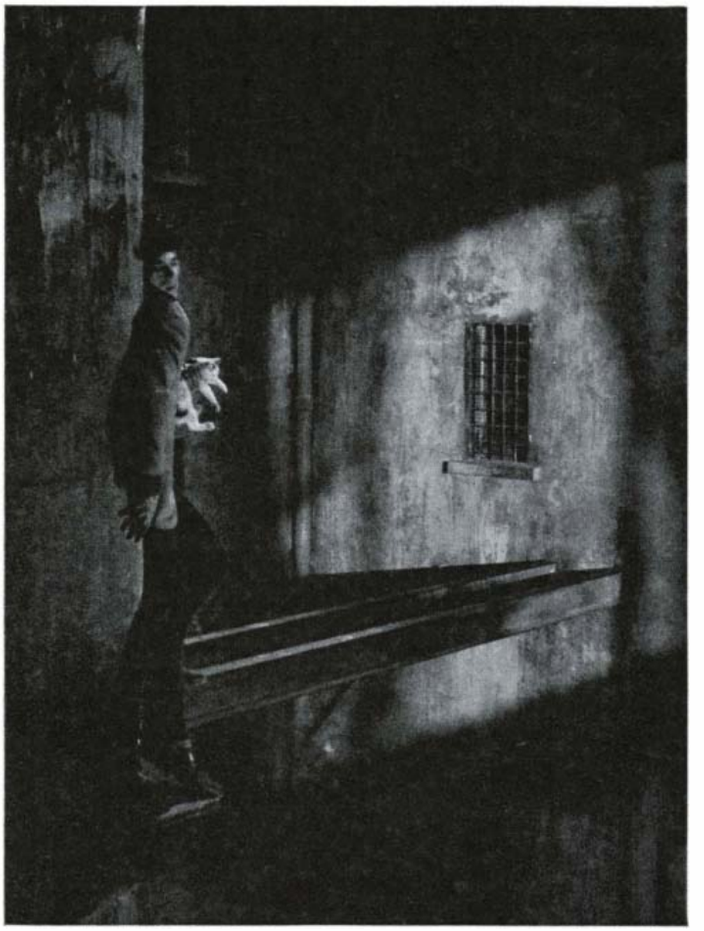
briefly to the war years, and to the subsequent period of economic reconstruction. During the Occupation, when the French cinema existed artificially and Carné was expressing his predicament in symbols of stone-imprisoned, beating hearts, the two films directly concerned with young people were both significantly set in prisons. Jean Dréville's *La cage aux rossignols* (Noël-Noël as a kindly master) and, more notably, Léo Joannon's *Le carrefour des enfants perdus* (Serge Reggiani as a put-upon youth) vigorously campaigned for understanding in the treatment of delinquents as opposed to methods of savage reprisal. Then came peace and, promisingly enough, a whole flood of films preoccupied with the younger generation. It began in 1947, two years earlier than Hollywood's first teenage cycle, and ended around 1951. In it, one may detect the roots of problems which have yet to be resolved.

The first thing one notices is that the most successful films of this period, whether set in the past (*Le diable au corps*, *Gigi*, *Olivia*) or the present (Cayatte's *Les amants de Vérone*, Allégret's *Une si jolie petite plage*, Cocteau's *Les enfants terribles*) were mainly literary in origin, tightly self-contained and detached from social issues. The modern ones, furthermore, reflected a pessimism inherited from the more morbid aspects of the Carné-Prévert tradition of the Thirties. Their appeal lay in the intensity of their playing, atmosphere and sheer pictorial description, rather than in the perfunctory contrivance of their episodes, which came dangerously close to exposing the limpness of the romantic-melodramatic tradition. True, Allégret's film concerned a young man and a boy, both from orphanages, corrupted by the sheer weight of society, and Cocteau's previous piece, *Les parents terribles*, was a bourgeois domestic tragedy, but the notion of vulnerable youth and abominable adults was still a formulary one, in effect socially valueless.

Formulary in a far less admirable way were the pseudo-social youth films which soon became a feature of a more and more rigidly reorganised industry. The prostitute theme, as stilted and high-minded as ever, was revived to feed Clouzot's *voyeurism* in *Manon*, a vulgar, inconclusive affair relating the delinquency of minors to the aftermath of war. Unvulgar, but tedious, Delannoy's *Le garçon sauvage* told the story of a prostitute, her lover and jealous 12-year-old son in terms of the Oedipus complex. Finally, the good faith of the wartime reformatory films splayed out into the routine suggestiveness, fights, dishabille and trumpery pictorial effects of Duvivier's *Au royaume des cieux*, Maurice Cloche's *La cage aux filles* and numerous other pieces set in girls' prisons. Quite obviously, the opportunities for creative adventure were few.

Three films only, during this period, came close to capturing the everyday reality of modern adolescence. The first, Roger Leenhardt's *Dernières vacances*, atmospherically evoked a summer holiday spent in a country house, and the sentimental problems of two childhood friends on the threshold of adult life. In texture like a novel, plainly autobiographical, the film turned out to be the only one Leenhardt had in him. Similarly another writer's film, René Wheeler's *Les premières armes*, was autobiographical, a solely critical success without progeny. The story of two sensitive boys forced into the harsh world of jockey apprenticeship, it seemed unique at the time both in its near-documentary technique and in its psychological precision. Its impact lay in a vivid portrayal of the boys' reactions to the indifference and brutality of their elders, and in its intimate understanding of the frustrations and crises of adolescence. Other films have been incidentally concerned with the lives of working-class youth (the coal-mine tram-boy in Daquin's *Point du jour*, Georges Poujouly's garage hand in *Assassins du dimanche* and cabin-boy in *Si tous les gars du monde*), but *Premières armes* remains France's only thorough and valuable account of an apprenticeship, its hardships and injustices.

In *Rendezvous de Juillet*, a far more ambitious project, Jacques Becker tried to give an equally thorough and unselfconscious picture of contemporary St-Germain-des-Prés youth. It had all the brilliance of external reproduction one would expect from this director—feverish jazz clubs, dramatic school, all the private customs of dress and conduct—but the actual dreams and depressions, insecurity and disillusionment of post-war youth escaped him; the gap between generations was apparently too wide. One suspects that Becker's lack of communication was an artistic rather than a personal failing. Unlike most Hollywood directors, there was nothing neurotic about the way he was intrigued and charmed by his young people. And yet, for all the sympathy of his attitude, his inability to catch the texture as well as the apparatus of living unwittingly bequeathed to the French cinema its newest stereotype: the adolescent clique or gang as an hermetically sealed, and so by implication anti-social, unit.



Bourgeois shock: Carné's "Les Tricheurs".

3

At least Becker tried to end his film optimistically, even if Daniel Gélin's serious-minded little group escaping from careerist girl-friends to explore Africa did sound rather like colonialist propaganda. The Fifties, however, were to be grey indeed. With the growing tendency towards costly co-production went a quick decline in themes of youth; then a narrowing down in the themes themselves to a pessimistic harping on delinquency and gang activities; and finally the relegation of the actual making of the films to some of the least lively and perspicacious directors from among the older generation.

1954 saw two films which found their starting point in Becker's escape image. Hervé Bromberger's *Les fruits sauvages* told the story of a band of poor children, led by a girl who has killed her drunken father, running away to live in an abandoned village on the Italian border. Lack of water forces them into the nearest town, where they are arrested. In Cayatte's *Avant le déluge*, five unhappy and unwanted boys,

The Dean Age (Germany): Horst Buchholz in Georg Tressler's "Die Halbstarken" (1956); rock 'n 'roll, teenage uniforms, blonde vamp, etc.

needing money to escape to a desert island from a Europe threatened with nuclear war, decide to commit a robbery. A policeman is shot, then a Jewish youth who might give them away, and finally an attempted suicide leads to a confession, a murder trial and flashbacks. In attempting to cover the whole social, historical and legal context of juvenile delinquency and parental responsibility, Cayatte forced a promising subject into little more than a rhetorical sermon. The following year, Delannoy's *Chiens perdus sans collier* built its case on stock characterisation (prostitute's son, unloved arsonist, wise guy from bad home). And Duvivier's *Marianne de ma jeunesse*, a throwback to the romantic manner, attempted to transport the adolescent mystery of a *Grand Meaulnes* to a boys' school in the Bavarian Alps, complete with gang of bullies, initiation ceremonies, haunted castle and girl held prisoner by aging lover.

What strikes one about all these films is their lack of inspiration, authenticity, of a spontaneous generosity towards youth. Evasive in their reliance on best-sellers, romanticism and the imitation of previous models, their sole distinction is

their craftsmanship. More recently, Autant-Lara's *En cas de malheur* offered a brilliantly perceptive study of a prostrate old sensualist and a broken marriage, but failed badly when it came to Bardot's Teddy girl Juggernaut, while Interlenghi's student-killer (leather jacket, Lambretta, jack-knife) is nothing but a Nemesis cipher. Similarly Franju's *La tête contre les murs* perfunctorily sketches in its disorientated, father-hating young hero against a background of amorality, wild parties and rich older women, makes a cursory—if arresting—analogy between the motor-cycling mania and arrested development, then goes tearing off at a tangent with a sensational enquiry into the French lunacy laws.

Carné's *Les Tricheurs*, on the other hand, situates itself squarely in Becker's old territory, St-Germain-des-Prés; its new generation of young people, at once more occult, supine and maladjusted than Becker's characters, express their disdain for all forms of bourgeois respectability and social integration in American jazz, liquor, senselessly dangerous exploits, petty larceny and even blackmail, and endless philosophising about their own sexual promiscuity. Up to a point the picture might well be true of sects in St. John's Wood, Copenhagen or West Berlin. Furthermore, the film's slang is out of date, its observation frequently inaccurate and its approach tentative in the extreme, so that it is difficult at first sight to see what all the fuss is about. In fact *Les Tricheurs* had several elements destined to earmark it for box-office greatness. It was the first time, in France, that a film had dared to tackle such a subject in a bourgeois, big city milieu; its slightly dated, middle-aged air gave it a spurious veneer of respectability; its dialogue was carefully calculated for its shock effect; and it had an orgy sequence, a *surboum* or "surprise party", that was to touch off in itself a great deal of press comment.

Les Tricheurs turned out to be France's *Rebel without a Cause*. With its arrival, its encouragement to young directors to correct its failings or outdo its party scene (*Les Cousins*, *Les Dragueurs*) and its open invitation to young people to rally self-importantly under a conspicuous banner, the problem of the misfit adolescent reached spectacular proportions. Alone, *Les Tricheurs* might have been written off as an ill-chosen come-back for an eminent director. But films like *Les Tricheurs* are never without issue. With journalists organising fights between rival gangs for the sake of a good picture, then abandoning their own term *blousons noirs* and substituting the initials J.V. (*jeunes voyous*), it was perhaps inevitable that producers should take a leaf out of Hollywood's book and start thinking in terms of an exploitation cycle.

Little time need be wasted on the J.V. films. Anyone who has seen Molinaro's *Des femmes disparaissent*, with its monotonous narrative of a young thug's exploits in breaking up a vice ring peppered with murders, rape and flagellation, will know the sort of thing. Others are on their way to London: *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*, a synthetic mixture of delinquency and racialism, actually set in America, and *La nuit des traqués*, a violent and amoral story of juvenile crime in Antwerp. The pernicious element in most of these films—in Bromberger's *Asphalte* and *Les loups dans la bergerie*, in Chenal's *Jeux dangereux*—is their perpetuation of the mystique of the gang. Under the circumstances, it would be difficult not to heave a sigh of relief at the news that Franju has abandoned his plan to make a film entitled *Blousons noirs*. After the thrills of *La tête contre les murs* and the symbolism of *Les yeux sans visage*, he seems the very last person to de-mythicise a leather jacket.

4

"Plenty has been said and written about the beat generation. Their problems are familiar to us all. I want to highlight a very different kind of youth: the generation who lived their

The Dean Age (Britain): Sylvia Syms and Kenneth Haigh in Herbert Wilcox's "My Teenage Daughter" (1955).

formative years through a period which might have held no future—yet who never lost their grip of normal standards."

This introduction to his second feature film by François Villiers, a young documentary director, is an encouraging sign. The film, *La verte moisson*, is dedicated to the humour, sanity and courage of a group of high school students in Occupied France who form a ring in the Underground and eventually sacrifice their lives. I haven't seen the film (it only came out at the end of last year), but it has been praised abroad for its maturity, discretion and sensitivity. It is one I would very much like to see, if only for its dedication and the corrective tone of its introduction.

Meanwhile, the J.V. cycle seemingly continues unabated. A quick glance through the past two years of *Variety* yields up reviews of juvenile delinquency films from Finland, Denmark, Spain, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Sweden's *The Vicious Breed*, the story of a 19-year-old boy released from a reformatory, manages perhaps predictably to outdo its competitors by mustering as its ingredients "sex, bitterness, sadism *and* homosexuality." Germany's *Der Pauker*, described as a "lighter" version of *Blackboard Jungle* ("humour plus leather-jacket juveniles"), stars a top rock 'n 'roll favourite, Peter Kraus, as the leader of a gang of toughs. Kraus turns up again in *Die Frühreifen*, as a playboy who throws teenage orgies and causes the death of a girl he tries to rape.

Italy, too, has its *gioventù bruciata*, or burnt-up youth, thriving on life for life's sake. But between them and any chance of their turning up on the screen (except, apparently, in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*) lies the Vatican. At any rate, ever since Antonioni's disastrous attempt to report the facts on juvenile delinquency without any kind of social comment (*I Vinti*, 1952), the subject would seem to have been dropped. One suspects, anyway, that the Italians haven't the temperament for the more extreme appurtenances of teenage hysteria. Elvis Presley's films provoked mild derision; and after a year or two of romantic comedies about Rome Teddy boys, Italy's own Marlon Brando, Maurizio Arena, found himself a national joke.

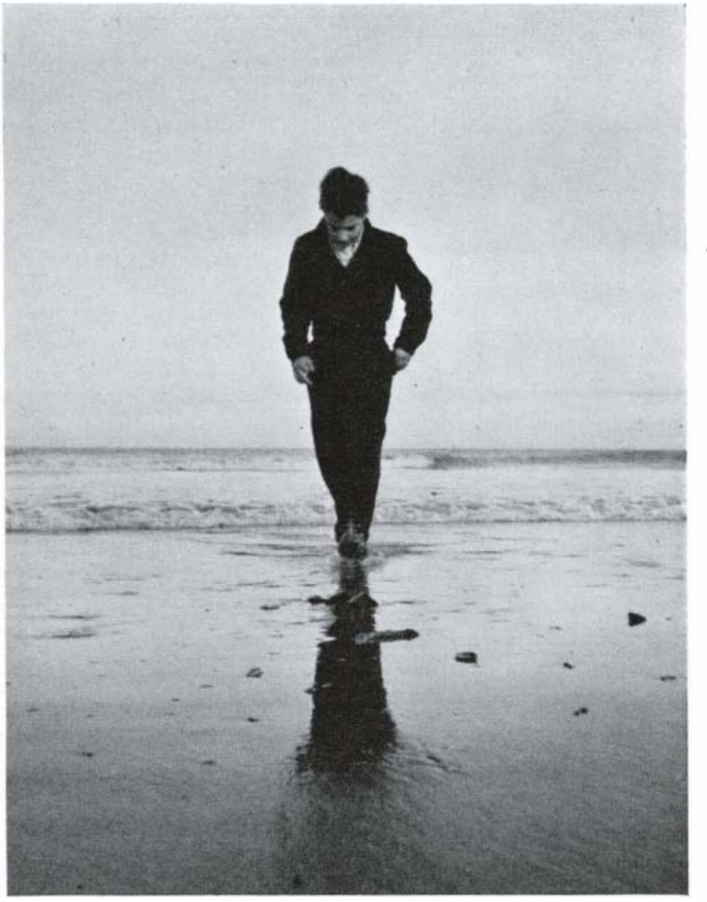
5

It is symptomatic of this whole question of youth and the cinema that I have not been able, in the course of these two articles, to write more about the other, positive, side of the picture. This has not been due to any reluctance on my part to weaken what may sometimes have seemed a ridiculous counsel of perfection. Unequivocal findings on palliative film-making are always bound to upset someone. Easy to make, many of these findings may seem difficult enough to put into practice. Heaven knows the gulf between generations is always vast. Yet there are films being made all the time whose purpose is to narrow instead of widen this gulf: films I cannot write about for no other reason than that nobody will show them.

It is four years since Lindsay Anderson praised *Gli Innamorati*, "a spirited colloquial comedy of ordinary young people by a new director, Mauro Bolognini," which he had seen at Cannes. Bolognini apparently specialises in films about young people at work, at home, in love, on holiday. They are generally favourably reviewed abroad. Even if they are bad, they couldn't be as bad as *Des femmes disparaissent*. And yet not one of them, *Marisa la civetta*, *Giovani mariti*, the one illustrated on SIGHT AND SOUND's cover, has been seen in this country. Similarly, German correspondents speak highly of *Warum sind sie gegen uns?* (*Why Are They Against Us?*), Bernhard Wicki's documentary-style film, acted by unknowns, about a factory-worker, his motor-cycling club and his engagement to the daughter of unsympathetic upper-class parents. This, and another film, *Jazzbanditen*, about a jazz club, may or may not be in the same street as Karel Reisz's films. Even so, and just in case something *is* stirring in the German film industry, one would like a chance to find out.

The matter, surely, has become a vital one. At a time when even intelligent film-makers seem hypnotised—like Chabrol in *Les Cousins*—into obscuring their own first-hand reportage with obsessive theories and symbols of purely esoteric interest, and when social conscience has become a far dirtier expression among young intellectuals than it ever was to their elders, what else can one do but ask plainly and simply for nothing less than the best that the cinema has to offer? Its audience, after all, is primarily a young one. And it is the pliably-minded adolescent, brought up on a diet of Teenage Werewolves and Dolls of Vice, who will probably become tomorrow's herd-minded adult, easily moved—if he can be moved—to hollow sentimentalism, violence, or fiercely uninformed prejudice.

Take a look at the parents in that remarkable film *Les quatre cents coups*: the father just a man his wife married when she inconveniently became pregnant—an amiable, disinterested, unadventurous sort of chap who brings home his pay and doesn't ask questions; the mother a nagging, shallow, pretty creature who lives only for her own pleasures. Both are supremely skilfully played without a false or exaggerated note. Then take a look at the boy whirling round in the amusement park centrifuge, robbed of all relationship to the true centre of things. One of Truffaut's many virtues is that he can be totally unselfconscious in his use of symbolism, and it is this naturalness, coupled with an extraordinary (for this kind of autobiographical subject) maturity and objectivity, which makes the ending of the film so memorable: the boy, arrested candid camera fashion by the side of the sea, turning back to face life, society, the audience. It is a stunning moment, because it contains a personal accusation. It is a consoling thought, or it ought to be, that there are still young directors springing up unequivocally prepared to make such an accusation.



Jean-Pierre Léaud in "Les Quatre Cents Coups".

"La Dolce Vita".

In the Picture

Fellini's "La Dolce Vita"

ROBERT HAWKINS *writes:* The recent Italian release of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* has been accompanied by the most violent public controversy in many a year over the picture's moral and artistic merits and demerits. Vatican influence aids the Catholic Church here to exercise an indirect censorship pressure much more effective than the antiquated censorship law, which in any case lacks a clear-cut definition of the censorable and is therefore subject to personal whims and shifts in official outlook. The Church's attitude to Fellini's film has largely been one of condemnation, and a leading newspaper finds it "dangerous and deplorable". In the circumstances, it is not surprising that moral considerations have got the upper hand in the controversy, as well as taking most of the headlines.

Preliminary critical reactions to the film were eminently enthusiastic, with only a few (though equally violent) dissenters. But the discussion has since deteriorated into a political-clerical contest. The Catholic Church and certain extreme right-wing groups demand the instant banning of the film both on moral grounds and on the basis of its hypothetical threat to prestige as a vehicle "denigrating the good name of Italy". The left-wing Press, on the other hand, ever quick to seize on a political opportunity to slap at the government, has launched an equally violent and over-blown campaign in defence of the film and of freedom of thought in general. Whether *La Dolce Vita* will go abroad—perhaps to the Cannes Festival—or whether it may be refused an export licence, remains unknown, and the whole controversy has developed in an atmosphere of rumours and contradictions.

No one has been more chagrined at this general diversion of attention from the film's artistic aspects than Fellini himself. After witnessing the snowballing reaction throughout the country, after being "accused," among other things, of being a "Communist," a "Catholic," a "purveyor of filth," as well as having been spat upon at the film's Milan première, he clearly feels that things have got out of hand. He is currently touring the country with a copy of the film, holding private screenings followed by discussions, in a personal attempt to set things straight and to restore a sense of proportion.

Considered and influential critical opinion, however, continues to add to the praise for *La Dolce Vita*; and the producers Angelo Rizzoli and Giuseppe Amato, who picked up the project after several other film-makers had turned it down, may find they have on their hands the biggest box-office property ever seen in this country. The effect on the industry as a whole has been equally electrifying. Future months should consequently see an increased investment in quality films and prestige productions, luxuries in which Italian producers have recently been reluctant to indulge.

The discerning filmgoer will find *La Dolce Vita* not only Fellini's best film but one of the most shattering and powerful statements of its time. It is brilliantly directed by a more mature Fellini, who has abandoned many of his facile though effective tricks of the past and instead adopts a direct and sincere styling well in advance of its time both in concept and technique. What may impress the casual viewer as an episodic film is actually a poem in verses and stanzas, making up an apocalyptic fresco of seven nightmarish nights and seven sobering dawns.

La Dolce Vita is about corruption and decadence: an uncompromising, thought-provoking, sobering and brutal allegoric picture of a certain society and way of life which has its exponents in the Italian capital but also, with local variations, in the rest of the world. In strong, incisive strokes, Fellini's images display the emptiness of these characters and of the world they inhabit. The fact that the episodes and characters—the parties and orgies, the "café society" world—are based on the writer-director's own experience makes the document all the more frightening.

The large cast has responded admirably to Fellini's demands, and there are few disappointing performances among the film's 86 speaking parts. Two gems among many: Anita Ekberg's instinctive portrayal of a Hollywood star on a visit to Rome; Yvonne Furneaux's earthy and possessive mistress. The contributions of Otello Martelli, Fellini's habitual cameraman, and of the composer, Nino Rota, are equally well attuned to the director's moods and desires.

The film permits no half-way reactions from the spectator. No concessions are made; one is asked to accept, or not. The world—or, if you wish, this particular world—is on the brink of catastrophe, Fellini seems to be saying in this anticipatory film. Its personages, knowing it or not, fighting it or not, are waiting for disaster to strike. Perhaps only a miracle can save them, yet so few, too few, have kept their faith in miracles; and more are losing it every day.

Bergman's "Jungfrukällan"

FREDERIC FLEISHER *writes:* The Stockholm opening on February 8th of Ingmar Bergman's *Jungfrukällan* (*The Virgin Spring*) has given rise to a lively discussion. Most film critics showered the film with lyrical praise. On the other hand, Dr. Bengt Idestam Almquist, commonly known as "Robin Hood" and the dean of Swedish film critics, was somewhat disappointed when he wrote that the film was "cruel but beautiful". Robin Hood felt that Bergman's work was warmer and more interesting when he wrote his own screenplays.

The intention of Bergman and his scriptwriter Ulla Isaksson

(she also wrote the screenplay for *So Close to Life*) was to transform a fourteenth century Swedish ballad of innocence, rape, murder and revenge into a film. *The Virgin Spring* is set against a background of Christianity and also of heathen figures and symbols such as Odin's raven. Relying primarily on natural sounds, Bergman uses a minimum of music and a few notes from medieval ballads.

As she rides through a forest on her way to church, the young, vain and spoilt virgin is raped and murdered by two herdsmen and their little brother. The herdsmen seek food and shelter that evening at the farm of the dead girl's father. When he learns of their deed, the father murders the two men and the little boy. The film centres on the guilt of those involved in the action and their reconciliation.

The Virgin Spring is an extremely powerful film, possibly Bergman's most powerful. It lacks, however, the human warmth of *Wild Strawberries* or the majesty of *The Seventh Seal*. Audiences leave the cinema torn and shattered by an unpleasant experience. The rape and murder scenes in particular have caused heated debate. The conservative *Svenska Dagbladet* (circulation about 130,000 daily) devoted an editorial to the subject in which it raised the question of whether Bergman's international reputation had influenced the Swedish board of film censorship in its decision not to cut the film. Erik Skoglund, head of the state censorship board, quickly replied that the censors were agreed that the film had definite artistic aims and the violence was an integral part of the whole. It is generally believed, however, that *The Virgin Spring* will be cut before it is shown in England or the United States.

Dr. Olof Lagercrantz, chief editor of the liberal *Dagens Nyheter* (circulation about 350,000 daily) and a leading literary critic, joined the discussion to state that film critics viewed Bergman with such respect and admiration that they didn't realise that "where there should be spirit and soul a dead machinery rattles". Lagercrantz claimed that critics are spellbound by Bergman's surface effects—an extremely beautiful series of picture postcards and some excellent scenes—and forget that it is the film as a whole they should evaluate.

Meanwhile, Ingmar Bergman is putting the final editing touches to his new film *Djävulens Oga* (*The Devil's Eye*), in which Don Juan returns to earth after three centuries in Hell on a "devilish assignment": to seduce the innocent daughter of a clergyman. Bergman says this will be a comedy based on the proverb "an innocent woman is a sty in the Devil's eye."

Bergman regularly receives handsome offers from abroad, but says he will stay in Sweden since "it is very important for a director not to be rootless". If he makes a film for a foreign producer, he will demand that he makes it in his own way and in Sweden. Bergman claims that as soon as he leaves Scandinavia he becomes filled with nervousness. As a result of this and his many other plans, it seems uncertain whether he will be able to stage Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata* for BBC Television this spring. He is likely to postpone the production until next year.

Later in the spring, Bergman will gather his crew to study the techniques of colour. He plans to shoot his first colour film during the summer, and before starting to use colour wants to be well-acquainted with its advantages and limitations. In the autumn he will devote most of his energies to stage direction at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm.

As Ingmar Bergman gains more and more international recognition, he is able to create and work with few restrictions. Meanwhile, the Swedish film industry is in the middle of a life and death struggle with the government entertainment tax of 33 per cent. on all tickets and with state run and supported television. The growth of television in Sweden is the fastest in Europe and at present there are more than 700,000 TV receivers in operation. Cinema owners claim that attendances have dropped by more than a third during the last three years, and the film industry has cut production by more than half. Producers hope that Parliament will reduce the entertainment tax to 15 per cent. this summer.

The crisis has compelled producers to make larger and more careful productions. Swedish films can no longer afford to experiment and cannot gamble on young directors. The past year's productions have been light comedies or thin thrillers; the one more serious film took up the topical problem of motorised juvenile delinquents. Major Swedish directors have been forced to turn to other mediums. Gustav Molander has directed television and stage plays; Arne Sucksdorff has become a film importer; Lars-Eric Kjellgren has left films for television; Hasse Ekman is making light entertainment films and Arne Mattsson is directing thrillers. The opera director Göran Gentele, who has made two musical comedies, is the only new name to gain recognition.

"The Virgin Spring": the girl (Birgitta Pettersson) is halted on her way through the forest.

Action Stations

ON BOTH SIDES OF the ATLANTIC, the problem of the showing of old feature films on television continues to haunt the industries. Sooner or later it was obvious that the issue would have to be squarely faced in this country; and it was equally clear that FIDO (the Film Industry Defence Organisation) had yet to meet a real test. This came abruptly early last January, with the announcement that Associated-Rediffusion had taken over Independent Film Distributors, and with it 55 post-war films produced by the Woolf Brothers and Major Daniel Angel. This was not the usual unloading of tired features, put out to television rather as tired horses are put out to grass. The titles involved in the deal included *Richard III*, *Moulin Rouge*, *The African Queen*, *A Kid for Two Farthings*, *Three Men in a Boat*; and from all the evidence the nights when these films are shown on TV could be fairly bleak ones for Britain's exhibitors.

Blandly, Associated-Rediffusion announced that they were themselves going into distribution and would offer the films they had acquired to the cinemas. The producers, equally calmly, claimed that they needed the money for current operations and were perfectly entitled to make the best possible terms for themselves. The industry reaction, however, was one of almost unequivocal condemnation: the producers' organisations issued statements; Sir Tom O'Brien warned that Union members employed in television might be instructed " not to work on any intended transmission of those films" if they were shown without Union consultation; the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association bitterly condemned the producers' "callous indifference to the future of the industry." Coming at a time when British production of TV series was at a particularly low ebb, the sale and its implications (more canned

material on TV; less work in current TV filming) seemed to hit at the technicians as well as the obvious exhibitor interests.

It has long been apparent, however, that FIDO, in its efforts to buy up films when necessary in order to keep them off television, really depends on major industry co-operation. It was the element of 'betrayal' in the sale, the by-passing of FIDO, which particularly incensed the industry; and trade press reports indicated a feeling that the industry's whole defence system needed strengthening. The main weapon, of course, is the threat of sanctions, a boycott by the cinemas of the offending producers' past and future films. Whether this could possibly work in practice remains to be seen: meanwhile there is no news that Mr. John Woolf and Major Angel intend to abandon film production.

In New York films are shown on the networks at the rate of twenty or more a day. Until now, there has been a general agreement that sales to TV should stop at the 1948 product. Now the devouring networks need more recent material, and the companies are prepared to sell. The disagreement here is with the artists, initially the writers' and actors' unions, who claim a right to a percentage share in these profits. The companies argue that every penny is needed for production finance—it is said, for instance, that bank advances have been made against the assets these films represent. Writers and actors have been prepared to back their claims with strike action, and as we go to press the actors' strike against seven major studios (Universal-International and most independents have come to terms) has resulted in an unprecedented Hollywood shut-down. What the long-term results might be can scarcely be guessed at this stage. On a short-term basis, it has been suggested that some films actually in production (including the Marilyn Monroe picture *Let's Make Love*) might have to be indefinitely shelved. Hollywood is already fighting to hold its position as the world film capital, with an increasing number of films being made abroad by American interests. In comparison with events in California, the British industry conflict is reduced to very small proportions.

The Case of Leni Riefenstahl

IT IS A PITY, IN A WAY, that we will not now be seeing Leni Riefenstahl at the National Film Theatre on April 10th, or hearing the lecture so innocently and innocuously billed as "My Work in Films". Her classic Olympic Games document of 1936, or her *Triumph of the Will*, the Nuremberg rally record which has done a lot to enlighten us about the perverse and brutal glamour of the Nazi mystique, could have entitled her to a hearing from any audience of film enthusiasts. But would we, in fact, have heard very much about these films? A talk about the mountaineering exploits of *The White Hell of Pitz Palü* or *The Blue Light*, extracts from which were to accompany the lecture, would have kept controversy all too obviously at arm's length.

But the decision of the Institute's governors to withdraw the invitation extended last autumn, was probably inevitable. In the atmosphere created by the sneaking evidences of revived Nazism in West Germany and by the world-wide rash of anti-Semitic slogan-smearing, Fräulein Riefenstahl's talk would inevitably have become a free-for-all: not "my work in films" but "your work for the Nazis". Although Leni Riefenstahl was cleared after the war at hearings by two de-Nazification tribunals, and although she can claim never to have "led during the war a team of cameramen producing propaganda films" (which would seem, in any case, a relatively minor issue), that "Hitler's perfect woman" tag is an impossible one to live down. How far the artist should be respected for his work and forgiven his political associations became the subject of a side-line debate between Mr. Ivor Montagu and Mr. Peter Sellers, both also billed to speak at the Theatre. Mr. Montagu announced that the Institute could have either his lecture or Fräulein Riefenstahl's; Mr. Sellers preferred the traditional liberal standpoint: "Surely it is a dangerous prospect . . . if an artist as an artist is not entitled to be heard . . ." The Institute itself, while withdrawing this invitation, spoke of its right to choose its guest speakers without reference to their political attachments. But was it, after all, the "artist as an artist" who made *Triumph of the Will*?

An ironical postscript: while this tiny tempest was raging, a film called *Girl of Shame* was keeping *Dolls of Vice* company at a London cinema. Made two years ago in West Germany, it is the work of a director not unknown as a Nazi propagandist—of Veit Harlan, whose 1939 *Jud Süss* was the most notorious of all the anti-Semitic films. No-one, apparently, protested.

Lee Remick in a scene from "Wild River", Elia Kazan's first film for more than two years. Montgomery Clift stars and the story concerns the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Warsaw: The Rate for the Job

BOLESLAW MICHALEK *writes*: A rather significant change in the system of payments for Polish screen artists has recently been agreed on. It concerns writers, directors, art directors, composers—in fact, the main creative talents involved in a film—and it is worth reporting for its possible effect on the development of Polish cinema.

The previous system was old-fashioned and not very logical: the director's basic salary, guaranteed by his contract, was relatively low, but he had the right to a series of supplementary payments which, taken together, about trebled his original salary. One of these additional payments, the fairly substantial "artistic prize", was distributed in a more or less mechanical way, those responsible taking into account the fact that it amounted to a concealed addition to a low basic salary rate. The upshot, in effect, was that the film artist's salary was linked neither to the real quality of his work nor to its commercial achievements.

The new system has still to be ratified and is not yet in force. Its principles, however, are clear enough. Firstly, there is a 100 per cent. increase in the basic contract salary, together with an abandonment of all the various awards and supplementary payments. At the same time—and this is the main point of the change—a dividend system has been devised which entitles the artist to a percentage payment based on the earnings of the film after its initial production cost has been recovered. (Generally speaking, the average Polish film has to be seen by nearly a million people before it recoups its cost.) The artist's payment is here directly linked to the film's box-office earnings and increases proportionately with its takings.

Some Polish entertainment films have earned up to three times their production cost at the box-office, and the makers of popular commercial pictures are therefore given a chance quite significantly to increase their own earnings. There remains, however, the problem of the film which for one reason or another attracts only a limited public, and whose maker would be penalised if the system were followed to its conclusion—a blind encouragement to pure entertainment film-making. To overcome any possibly prejudicial effects, a measure has been introduced with the object of putting the creator of a valuable but "difficult" work on an equal footing with his more commercial colleagues. Over and above the general 100 per cent. increase in the basic salary, an artist will be entitled to a payment roughly equivalent to the percentage system if his work is marked by "artistic or ideological quality or great social value." These safeguards also extend to the system of film finance. The government advances credits to the film units, amounting to a percentage of a production's proposed cost. The advance varies between 40 and 75 per cent., the remainder of the cost being met out of earnings; and, again, the size of the advance will depend on the film's artistic quality, ideological content and social value.

This new system reflects the intentions of the government both culturally and economically. On the one hand, there is the need to encourage quality films; on the other, the need to strike a balance between public demand and current production. The method seems logical, but the way it works out in practice will depend on the interpretation given to certain ideas which still need clarification.

"The Bells Are Ringing": Judy Holliday as the telephone operator heroine of Minnelli's new musical, with book by Comden and Green.

Press Conference

PROJECTS FOR A FILM about Lawrence of Arabia have recently hung before the British film industry like some alluring mirage. The Rank Organisation announced a production and abandoned it. Anthony Asquith was mentioned as director; Terence Rattigan was to write the script; Alec Guinness was to play Lawrence, then Dirk Bogarde . . . Now Sam Spiegel, producer of *On the Waterfront* and *Bridge on the River Kwai*, has announced his own production plans; characteristically, the Press were invited to cocktails at Claridge's to hear the details.

Bland and solid, Mr. Spiegel has the impresario air, the special confidence of a man who is planning a picture at a cost of something over £2 million. He has managed to acquire the rights to *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* from Lawrence's brother and literary executor; he has signed up David Lean to direct; he talked with easy confidence of casting—Sir Laurence Olivier would be approached to play Field Marshal Allenby—and of location problems, the search for "friendly Arabs" who would appreciate having the film made in their territory. Although the contract had not yet been signed, he was confident that Marlon Brando would play Lawrence. The news, perhaps, sent a slight shiver through the assembled Press. Mr. Spiegel spoke admiringly of Brando's Mark Antony, dismissed as unimportant the question of physical resemblance to Lawrence, and made it realistically clear that a production of this size needs this sort of international star. At least, no one can call it an uninteresting piece of casting.

David Lean intends the film to follow the desert campaign, conceivably with an epilogue reference to the later Lawrence. The climax will be the entry into Damascus. He sees the story as a "wonderful subject" because it concerns a complex individual at the centre of a big canvas; but on the details of interpretation, his approach to the complexities of Lawrence's character, he refused to be drawn. Terence Rattigan's play *Ross*, the story not of the hero of the Arab Revolt but of the Lawrence who tried to submerge himself into the ranks of the R.A.F., will be seen later this year with Alec Guinness. Brando's Lawrence will not reach the screen until fairly late in 1961.

Laslo Benedek rehearses a scene for his first French picture, "Recours en Grâce", with Raf Vallone and Emmanuelle Riva.

Projection Standards

LOUIS MARCORELLES *writes*: Jean Cocteau once noted that our appreciation of a film often depends on conditions far removed from anything in the director's mind: on the hardness or softness of the cinema seating, on the state of our digestions, the noisiness of our neighbours, and, last but not least, on the quality of projection. With the coming of the big screens, this last problem assumed special significance. There are countless small cinemas in both London and Paris which are inadequately equipped for first-class CinemaScope projection. Apart from the wish to show standard films on the largest possible screens, with the resultant clipping of the top and bottom of the frame, one all too often gets blurred images, inadequate sharpness of definition. With CinemaScope, particularly, the projectionist often has to fight a hopeless battle: he cannot get an image equally clear both at the centre of the screen and at its edges, and has to settle for one or the other. The responsibility for higher standards rests with the exhibitors.

It might have been thought that the so-called "total" screens associated with the Todd-AO system (*Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific*), with M-G-M's Camera 65 system (*Ben-Hur*) and with Super Technirama 70 (*Solomon and Sheba*) would largely have overcome these problems. But on a recent visit to London, when I saw *Ben-Hur* and *Solomon and Sheba* projected on to their giant screens, I was considerably disillusioned. The projection methods used are similar: the film itself is larger than usual (70mm. against the standard 35mm.) but the projection system seems roughly the standard one, with the film running vertically through the projector. This is in contrast to the horizontal projection system, beginning with a double image, which Paramount prefer for some of their big VistaVision films.

In an effort to overcome some problems of giant-screen projection, and to avoid distortion with a light beam angled from a high and distant projection box, special projection boxes have been erected in the middle of the orchestra stalls. But these boxes themselves seem too close to the screen. The result is that a short focus lens has to be used to achieve the extreme enlargement of the image, and this means that clear definition is again endangered.

Having seen *Solomon and Sheba* in Paris, projected at the Gaumont Palace on to a giant screen 24 metres by 12 by a double horizontal system like that used for VistaVision (with, it's worth pointing out, English Gaumont-Kalee machines specially installed for the occasion), I can only say that this film is seriously damaged in its London screening. This is not the place to mention the aesthetic quality of a film which, as I originally saw it, seemed to me the equal of such celebrated historical spectacles as *Intolerance* or *Cabiria*. But I would like to stress the extraordinary sharpness of definition achieved through the Super Technirama 70 process and through a projection method which attains equal clarity right across the width of the screen. Distortion and haziness at the edges of the screen are eliminated; and King Vidor is justified in his claim that "the features of an extra at the extreme periphery of the screen are perfectly discernible." One couldn't say this of the London version. The film's battle scenes are remarkable; but the one to two screen ratio, in which the director consciously worked, is destroyed at the London screening, just as it will be in the CinemaScope version of the film which will probably go out on release.

RUSSIA revisited

DAVID ROBINSON

David Robinson and Lindsay Anderson travelled to Moscow towards the end of last year, having been invited by the Union of Film-makers of the U.S.S.R to visit the Soviet film centres.

Friday: WE KNEW FOR SURE THAT WE WERE ON OUR WAY back to Russia when we noticed that each lunch served on the jet plane was slightly different from the others: one had caviare and another salmon, one biscuits, another cake, and so on. A Russian on the plane (one of only two other passengers) said that he had just spent a fortnight in London at a B.S.I. Conference. He had asked his British colleagues what film he should see, and they had recommended *Solomon and Sheba*. He didn't think much of it. Did he like Soviet films? Some; but he thought they were not funny enough. The last he'd really enjoyed a lot was *Carnival Night*. He wished they would make more musicals . . .

At Moscow airport we were met by Sergei Yutkevitch, whom we both knew already, and Mark Donskoi. Our rooms at the Metropol, on Sverdlov, once Theatre Square, overlooked the Bolshoi and Maly theatres. Although portraits of Lenin now eye the erotic little *art nouveau* bronzes on the wide staircases, the Metropol can have changed little since Czarist times. The aged bootblack in the hall, the restaurant orchestra, the *poulet à la Metropol* don't at all fit in with popular notions of Soviet life.

At dinner we talked mostly about films, and were surprised to discover how many more foreign films Russians were able to see now than two years ago, when we were last here, and when every Russian had seen the same two "British" films: *Lady Hamilton* (pronounced Gamilton) and *Waterloo Bridge*. (Yutkevitch, in fact, has often been abroad, to Festivals; but Donskoi has rarely left Russia.) We were struck, too, by irreconcilable differences of taste between us. They hold Christian-Jaque in high esteem; they love *Woman in a Dressing Gown*; they think we are mad because we like *Private Ivan Brovkin*. "And the sequel, *Brovkin in the Virgin Lands*," they say, "is even worse." They consider these rather vulgar propaganda films, with no contact with reality. We told them that we felt much the same about *Woman in a Dressing Gown*. On the whole, though, they feel Festival films are badly chosen; and—apart from *Destiny of a Man*—thought poorly of the selection shown during the Soviet Film Week in Britain. There is still in Russia, as everywhere else in the world, an unbridgeable gap between art and commerce, they said.

Donskoi told us that both the boys who played Gorki in his trilogy were killed at the front during the war. The boy who played the cripple is now a celebrated *maître de ballet*.

Saturday: MEETING WITH A GROUP OF LEADING SOVIET CRITICS. Mrs. Lena Pogojeva edits the influential monthly film magazine *Iskusstvo Kino*; Ilya Weisfeld, a lecturer at the Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) specialises in problems of Dramaturgy, a subject hardly mentioned in Britain; Nikolai Abramov is a specialist in social documentary. An enthusiast for Free Cinema, he still always contrives to bring the conversation back to Dziga-Vertov and Esther Shub . . . For the first of many times, we realised that the Russian conception of criticism is different from ours, is something much less direct and positive. A Russian critic will state that something is good or bad; and he will spend pages on minute examinations of specific points. But somehow statement and discussion never exactly connect. This is not a Soviet but a Russian characteristic. You find the same thing with Stasov in the last century.

After lunch, Donskoi showed us his latest film, *Foma Gordeyev*, an adaptation from Gorki. Donskoi is like one of his own characters: small, stocky, with upstanding grey hair and a Russian face which alternates between excessive jollity and pensiveness. He jokes a great deal, but will shift rapidly to extreme gravity. After enthusiastically feeding us with nuts and chocolate, he introduced his film with a solemn speech in which he said that the artist should always trust the taste of the people; that he must not be afraid to keep up with the times, to be modern and not to rest upon his previous work. This, we supposed, was the explanation of the "virtuoso" style of *Foma Gordeyev*—trick cuts from sequence to sequence, elaborate camerawork. One still longed for the directness and simplicity of the Donskoi of twenty years ago. The cameraman was a woman, Margarita Pilikhina, who is known as "Urusevsky in skirts" . . .

In the evening Yakov Segel showed us the film he had made

with Lev Kulidzhanov, *The House I Live In.* We were a little disappointed after the praise the film had received, and its Brussels prize: as representing the younger generation of Soviet film-makers, it seemed tame and traditional . . . Segel himself is a tall, handsome man of about 35. He told us that he and a group of friends who served together during the War had made a pact not to show or write about anything they had not themselves lived through and seen with their own eyes. So far they have maintained their resolution. The directors Segel most admires among the older generation are Heifits, Gerassimov and Roshal, particularly the last. He has little to say about his contemporaries. Since *The House I Live In*, both Segel and Kulidzhanov have made films on their own; but neither *The First Day of Peace* nor *Parental Home* seem to have enjoyed very great critical success.

Sunday: AT THE LENIN MUSEUM WE REMARKED ONCE AGAIN ON the Russian ability to humanise. For all that he is commemorated in this huge red-brick Museum (the old Duma in Revolution Square), Lenin remains a real person. The little trails of schoolchildren—girls in pinafores, boys with cropped hair—are fascinated by the tales of Vladimir Ilitch; and every one of the thousands of exhibits has a personal tale woven round it, which any Russian can tell you . . .

It was on the advice of Inna, our interpreter and chaperone, that we went to the Stanislavski Theatre to see a favourite Soviet play, Afinogenov's *Mashenka*, which has held the stage for twenty years. It turned out to be terrible—a sort of Russian *Daddy-Long-Legs.* The audience was the kind you might find at any matinée at the Whitehall, looking like English suburban bourgeoisie. Later we found that no one with pretensions to sophistication would be seen dead at *Mashenka.* But this audience must still be fairly representative . . .

Monday: MOSFILM HAS CHANGED CONSIDERABLY IN THE LAST two years: vast new buildings in Soviet Palladian style; new stages; a greatly increased production schedule for the 1960's. *Plus ça change* . . . Alexandrov was not at work; but the studio he is shooting in seems to have the same bits and pieces of scenery against which he was shooting popular vocalists two years (and maybe twenty years) ago. And the same chief engineer who in 1957 rushed us off to see his travelling matte process now wanted us to seethe latest developments in 70 mm. How did we think it compared with the American processes?

Somebody was making a spectacle; Piriev was shooting *White Nights of St. Petersburg* on an immense set. Against all the evidence he insisted that Soviet film-making was as economical as ours. He made us have our photographs taken with him and his cast. "I hate having my photograph taken," he said. (He was once an actor.)

Talking to our guide, we were again struck by the number of films from the West Russians now see. She liked the musicals best, although she thought *Kwai* was marvellous. She wished Mosfilm would make more musicals and comedies.

The most enthusiastically dedicated people we met in Moscow were the sound effects people at Mosfilm. A man and four girls, they all seemed crazily absorbed in their noises. They overwhelmed us with sound effects, operating wind machines

Donskoi's "Foma Gordeyev".

and sea machines, and delving into cupboards for their best horses' hooves. How, they asked, were such things managed in England?

. . . Yutkevitch's wife has been with the Bolshoi Ballet for more than forty years and is best known for her interpretation of Lady Capulet. After dining with her and her husband, we went to the Satire Theatre to see Yutkevitch's production of *The Bed Bug*, the farcical morality by Mayakovsky first produced by Meyerhold in 1928. Later banned for many years, it was only revived—with immense success—a year or two ago. Now there are two productions running, at the Mayakovsky as well as the Satire. Everyone agrees that Yutkevitch's is the better; and it is dazzling, light and witty and beautifully designed (partly by Yutkevitch himself). The ending has been changed: Yutkevitch has discarded Mayakovsky's anarchic *Brave New World* conclusion in favour of a picturesque reprise and tableau. He explains that this is "more effective dramatically."

Tuesday: THE AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITION LOOKS PRETTY DEAD in winter; but a fair number of people had appeared from somewhere to make up the audience for Circorama, the newest cinematic wonder. Its presentation is attractively modest. The building is smaller than you would expect; and the 22 screens are not used to pound your senses. The most striking impression is the acute sense you get of the geography of a scene. You are surrounded by little cartoon people; taken on a sight-seeing tour; landed in the middle of a railway marshalling yard or a Red Square parade; ringed by Cossack horsemen. The big technical problem with so many screens is that the light level in the auditorium gets too high for good definition. Hence, when all 22 screens are in use, they are obliged to restrict Circorama to night scenes. Only two of the twelve operators were men; the majority of projectionists in the U.S.S.R. seem to be women.

The Gorki Studios, across the road in Textilshchikov Street, are much smaller and less up to date than Mosfilm; but they are being enlarged, and there is a livelier and homelier air about them. We said that many of our favourite films—including, of course, the Gorki trilogy—had been made here; and they offered to show us a new film which they thought would especially interest us . . . *Memory of the Heart* is about an English airman who crashes in Russia during the war and is sheltered by a village teacher. Years later he comes back to find her, only to learn that she was massacred, with other villagers, by the Nazis. The Englishman is played by Alexei Popov (Yutkevitch's Iago) with a Macmillan make-up. Ralph Parker unexpectedly appears in a small role. The film is actually terrible. The director is Tatiana Liozvana, one of Gerassimov's favourite pupils. Gerassimov himself wrote the script and the heroine is played by Tamara Makarova (Mrs. Gerassimov). Introduced to the director, we made grateful use of a favourite Soviet critical formula: *ochen interesni* (very interesting). That is what we told Gerassimov too, when we met him later.

It was a relief, later, to see Yutkevitch's newest film, *Stories of Lenin*. The first episode, in black and white, tells of an incident when Lenin was hiding on a farm, about 1915; the second, in colour, describes his last days and death at Gorki. Yutkevitch is a fine film-maker, impeccable in taste and timing and pictorial sense. But it is sad to find that in Russia, as in the West, you must speak to the mass audience in euphemisms. Lenin's last days were not nearly as graceful as this; but how could you show a Soviet audience this giant humbled by sickness, unable to speak or read or write or do anything except think? At the autopsy on Lenin, they found that his sclerosed brain weighed all of seven pounds . . .

Wednesday: "DOCUMENTARY STUDIOS" IS SOMETHING OF A CONtradiction in terms; and indeed there was little to see there apart from films going through their last technical stages, and a lot of people wandering around between assignments. The technical facilities here, though, are nearly incredible to anyone used to documentary set-ups in this country. Anderson was quite angry to see a 100-piece orchestra being used to record the score for some two-reel popular science short. But perhaps film-makers can have too much of a good thing . . . The films we saw—a well-made newsreel, one comic and one lyrical impression of Moscow life, and a comic film by Obratsov about penguins—hardly seemed in proportion to the resources of Soviet documentary film-making. As with many of the features we saw, the quality that was lacking was *excitement*—excitement both in the medium and in contemporary life.

It is, of course, a platitude that art prospers in time of crisis, not in periods of peace and prosperity; and there is no question of the average Russian's satisfaction in his own prosperity and the prospects of peace. The change in only two years is remarkable. Most people have the telly at home, are comfortably fed, clothed, and can afford a good night out every so often. And plays like *Mashenka* and (in its revised form) even *The Bed Bug*—like Soviet painting and sculpture—do nothing to disturb these contented lives. People talk quite freely now; artists even make slightly self-conscious jokes about being "formalist" or "Stalinist". Daily life is not very unlike that of the average Western European.

When people like Kozintsev complain (as they often do) that there are no writers, I think they mean rather that writers are not finding subjects to excite them, from the life of their times. There has been, it is true, a move away from the Revolutionary historical subjects; but a lot of so-called contemporary films are actually about the last war. This is not, of course, a specifically Russian problem by any means; and I am sure that it is a stage of development which must soon pass. There is, after all, plenty to write about.

Meanwhile I think this climate to some extent explains the premium placed on physical excitements, on the kind of bravura of *The Cranes Are Flying* and *Foma Gordeyev*. Also the exhumation of names like those of Mayakovsky, Meyerhold, and Tretyakov is not solely the result of post-Stalinist historical possibility; but also arises from a nostalgia for the intellectual excitements (and to hell with "formalism") of the Lunacharsky period . . .

The Georgian film, *Somebody Else's Children*, has something of the quality we too often missed in the Moscow-produced films and it fired us with a desire to see Georgia and the Tiflis studios. The film was shown in London at last year's Festival; seeing it here in Russia, we were specially aware of how different is the temperament of the Georgians. (Later we learned that Rank, buying a package of Soviet films, rejected this one because, they said, the heroine had a moustache. If they acted with this sort of temperament, it mightn't hurt some Rank actresses to grow beards . . .)

Dinner with the Donskois. The Yutkevitchs are European; the Donskois definitely Russian. There is a family joke that their son, Sasha, who is studying at a political institute, dare not let his father know that he would have liked to be a film-maker. Father insists that it is an unreasonably hazardous profession; the expectation of life is lower than in any other occupation . . . He told us that he was once asked whether he was free to make whatever films he wanted. No, his answer had been, "I am responsible to the people. I am not free to make films that would hurt or corrupt, or that might be against peace . . ."

Afterwards, at Dom Kino, we showed a collection of independent short films made in Britain in recent years. Yutkevitch had persuaded us to save Dick Williams' *The Little Island* for a special show to makers of animated films. (This took place later, while we were in Leningrad: we gathered that they were a little bewildered, and found the film *ochen interesni*.) The audience on this occasion was more or less equivalent to a meeting of the British Film Academy. Anderson introduced the films with a vigorous speech, commenting also on the lack of excitement we had noted. Happily the Russians seem to enjoy criticism.

ABOVE: Georgian temperament. The heroine of the Tiflis Studios' production *Somebody Else's Children*, about a foster mother and her adopted family.

ABOVE RIGHT: three films by young directors. Top: *The House I Live In*, Segel and Kulidzhanov's episodic chronicle of city life. Centre: *The Colt*, diploma film by the student Vladimir Fetin. Below: Alexei Batalov's new version of Gogol's *The Overcoat*, with R. Bykov.

RIGHT: historical reconstruction. Maxim Shtraukh in a factory meeting scene from Yutkevitch's *Stories of Lenin*.

Reactions to the films were a little unexpected. *Every Day Except Christmas* puzzled them a bit; there is still a considerable fear of anything that might be interpreted as formalist. The technical limitations of *Enginemen*, too, foxed them. But they adored Jack Gold's *Happy As Can Be*, a film about a factory outing to Southend. They were most affected, however, by *March to Aldermaston*, which was shown last. Donskoi who (not alone) had cried most of the way through it, kissed us and said that he would like to go on the next march . . .

Thursday: BACK TO TEXTILSHCHIKOV STREET, TO THE NORTH OF the city, to the Institute of Cinematography (VGIK). The resources of material, of teachers, of time and money, the insistence on a proper cultural background here, make one despair of our own hopes for a National School of Cinematography . . . We saw a class of actors at a philosophy lecture. They looked as bored as young actors anywhere would look at a philosophy lecture . . . We also saw three or four student films. Technically almost faultless, they were livelier than most of the work we had seen at the Documentary Studios. The best by far was by a student named Fetin—a two-reel stop-action film made for the footwear trade, with an anarchic story about the boots and shoes coming to life in a ferocious revolt against their thoughtless owners. The boot-manufacturers were not particularly pleased with the film. Sponsors, it seems, are the same anywhere in the world . . .

Arriving two hours later at Gogolevski Boulevard, I knocked on twenty or more doors, advised by three small boys in cloth caps, before I finally found Pera Atasheva's flat. I had been several times before, but in the rain and darkness I could not remember it. Pera Atasheva is the widow of S. M. Eisenstein and lives in an old-fashioned apartment crammed with Eisenstein's library and papers and pictures: Mexican relics, stills, books, paintings, pictures of Chaplin, whom, as did Eisenstein, Atasheva immensely admires.

Just out of the clinic, she was in poor health, but vital as ever. She is racing to transcribe Eisenstein's manuscripts—trunks full of them—since she alone can in many cases decipher them and attribute the various literary quotations . . . She remembered everything we had talked about when we last met, and is delighted because I remember her definition of the essence of England—"Yardley's Lavender, Pears' Soap and Lipton's Tea."

A couple of friends were helping with the work of transliteration; one of them Olga Tretyakova, the first Soviet actress, the editor of Mayakovsky's magazine, the widow of the first Soviet dramatist, S. Tretyakov, whom the reference books are beginning to mention once more. (Even three years ago, his name was not included in the credits of the films he wrote.)

I had to meet the Yutkevitchs at the theatre; but Atasheva was insistent that I should go back afterwards, since she never goes to bed before 2 a.m. . . . Tretyakova accompanied me to the bus; and we talked about *The Bed Bug*. She thinks Yutkevitch's production is better than Meyerhold's. Often the people who lived through them are much less willing than the younger ones to discuss the old days. The Tretyakovs were shining lights in the brilliant days when Lunacharsky was Minister of Culture. Today Mayakovsky is a hero again; and no one remembers the unhappiness of his return from Paris, or his suicide . . .

Left: Picasso congratulates Yutkevitch after a Cannes festival screening. Right: Donskoi and René Clair meet in Moscow.

Obratsov's Puppet Theatre was presenting a skit on American gangster films. Technically it was most ingenious, especially a car chase suggested simply by the sound of sirens and by flashing headlights. But Obratsov, with a single doll in his arms, is something greater than this. The audience here is completely different from *Mashenka*—smarter than a West End first-night audience. Inna, our interpreter, denies that there is any such difference . . .

Atasheva and her friends had cooked a huge meal for me. They had just finished transliterating a manuscript on Pushkin, the original of which will now go to the new Pushkin Museum in Moscow. It is terrible to think of the amount of time and energy Eisenstein spent on these piles of manuscript when he could not make films . . . Atasheva talked about the war days at Alma Ata; we spoke of new English plays and she said she would like to have a copy of *A Taste of Honey*.

Kozintsev, she said, was cross because she had had the new SIGHT AND SOUND before him, even though he had an article in it. She is immensely pleased to receive SIGHT AND SOUND, though annoyed with us because of some errors in an article on *Ivan the Terrible, Part II*. The article mentioned sequences described in the scenario which did not appear in the finished film. "People might think that the copy shown in England is not complete," she said, "but it is integral, just as Eisenstein left it . . ."

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FRIDAY AND SATURDAY WERE HOLIDAYS FOR THE 42ND Anniversary of the October Revolution. In Red Square on Saturday it was bitingly cold, but the spectators were out for a good spectacle and a good time; women were selling cardboard cups of hot spiced wine out of vacuum flasks. The parade itself was not by any means as ominous as our newsreels with their dubbed-on doom music might lead one to suppose. But the exact timing, and the national anthem stressed by gunfire, is impressive.

After watching the parade and its homelier sequel—the Civil Parade, in which plain citizens join with their flags and flowers—we took the night train to Leningrad; and were seen off by Fania Abramovna, Yutkevitch's secretary, and by Mr. Abramov, the documentary specialist. Anderson kept singing the Czarist national anthem (which no one minded, if they even recognised it) and said what a marvellous film the fall of the Romanoffs would make. "Esther Shub made such

Pera Atasheva: her apartment is "crammed with Eisenstein's library and papers and pictures".

a film," said Mr. Abramov. What was her attitude? Mr. Abramov's answer was pensive: "Somewhat critical, I would say . . ."

Sunday: WE ARRIVED IN LENINGRAD IN THE RAIN: CLIMATICALLY it seems to be the Manchester of Russia; but a fantastically beautiful city—a masterpiece of eighteenth-century town planning, with an elaborate system of canals with elegant iron bridges. If you read Pushkin you do not need a guide book to Leningrad. Still, it is a surprise to turn off Nevsky Prospect and find yourself in the middle of *October*, in the great forecourt of the Winter Palace with its miraculous crescent. The Hermitage Museum with its 400 galleries and two million exhibits is something like a miracle, too . . . A small boy gazed at my ski coat, fur cap, 16-inch bottoms and dark glasses and delightedly whispered to his friend "Stilyag!" No, his friend corrected him; it was a foreigner.

The Kirov can have changed little since, as the Maryinsky Theatre, it was the principal Imperial Theatre; its decoration is still the famous cream and blue and gold. Again a different audience; not unlike an English ballet audience, except that there were a lot of sailors and soldiers. The balletomanes are younger now than in the Czarist days and occupy the gallery instead of the stalls. The ballet was *The Shore of Hope*—at once awful and fascinating. Awful that they should still be making crude anti-American allegories; fascinating in its evidence of an attempt to absorb Western (even American) styles.

Monday: A SERIOUS DAY AT LENFILM STUDIOS, WHICH WE found a very sympathetic place: more vitality and dedication than at either Mosfilm or Gorki. We told the studio director that we seemed to hear much more about Moscow productions than about those of his studio, perhaps because the headquarters of Sovexportfilm are in Moscow. He talked about the predominantly one-way traffic of artists between Leningrad and Moscow. Yutkevitch, for instance, used to be a Leningrad director. One result is, however, that Lenfilm seems to have more young directors than any other studio. Several—Vengierov, Batalov, Ershov, Chedotarov—are thirty or younger. Wolfovitch and Kurikhin (combined ages about 50), are making *The Last Inch*, after James Aldridge's novel.

Arnold Vitol, one of their chief scenarists, is also very young. We learned that he has done the scenario for *The Colt*, the four-reeler that the student Vladimir Fetin is making here as his diploma film, under the supervision of Kozintsev. We saw a rough-cut of part of it and met Fetin himself—a broad-shouldered, quiet, humorous young man.

In the buffet, by contrast, we met the doyen of Lenfilm and one of the oldest working film-makers in the world, Alexander Ivanovsky. Now eighty, he was making films in the Czarist days; and in the early days of the revolution was the only film artist allowed his private horse-cab. He is still tremendously interested in the cinema and wanted to discuss with us why the short story film has never been developed as a genre. It is some years since Ivanovsky directed a film, but he is still working as a supervising producer.

Among Lenfilm's senior directors are Roshal, Vassiliev (who was ill at the time, and has since died), Ermler (at present making a film about ship-builders) and Iosip Heifits. On one of the stages Heifits was directing Alexei Batalov in *The Lady with the Dog*, from a Tchekhov story. It looks like excellent teaming; both director and actor work with the same quiet authority and confidence. After this film Batalov may be obliged, through ill health, to give up acting. He was eager that we should see a film he has directed himself—a new adaptation of Gogol's much-filmed *The Overcoat*. It turned out to be excellent, authentically capturing the grimness and the grotesque of Gogol's world . . . Heifits' cameraman is Andrei Moskvin, who shot much of *Ivan the Terrible*. His taciturnity is a byword in the studios, and he is small, shy, bespectacled, assured and interested in everything—the sort of man you find all over the world among the best technicians.

Dinner with Kozintsev, who speaks excellent English in his distinctive, high-pitched voice, at our hotel (the Europa—pure *art nouveau* this time). We go over the usual subjects; and find that the times when Kozintsev seems most animated are when he recalls the 'twenties, the time when he, Yutkevitch and Trauberg—the Theatre of the Eccentric Actor—were in their teens and Pudovkin and Eisenstein, in their middle twenties, seemed old men. It is the same with Yutkevitch, when he talks about *Fantomas*.

Tuesday: BACK IN MOSCOW, WITH TOO MANY THINGS TO DO; more that had to remain undone. We had still seen none of the rare Dziga-Vertovs, or Eisenstein's newly rediscovered first film, *Glumov's Diary*. We did catch up on some films, though—*Kommunist* and some documentaries by Karmen, perhaps the best modern Soviet documentarist. And we managed to run to earth someone from *Ivan Brovkin*—the actor Leonid Kharitonov, who played Brovkin himself. He is a good, conscientious actor with MXAT and has a sizeable role in one of their new productions. He actually likes *Brovkin* and thinks that its considerable popular success at least softened the critics' attacks. Perhaps Kharitonov is a bit of a Brovkin himself; at least he seems to be well-known at the ice cream parlour in Gorki Street, a favourite hang-out for the young about town.

Outside the Art Theatre we met Vladimir Belokurov, one of the older MXAT actors. We had met in London; and he said that he was now working at Mosfilm in *Dead Souls*. We agreed in our hopes that the film would be a success, if only for the sake of the director, Trauberg, who has had little success since his partnership with Kozintsev ended fifteen years ago. His last film, *Soldiers Marching*, was generally accounted a failure.

Both Kharitonov and Belokurov were delighted that we were going to see *The Lower Depths* at MXAT. It is, they said, "One of our great productions, just as Stanislavski left it." Lukyanov, who plays Kleshch, had been less enthusiastic when we met him that morning; and in fact it was a grave disappointment after the Tchekhov productions that came to London. It is somehow ossified. Just as Stanislavski left it, but run down, the life gone out of it, actors impersonating the creators of their roles . . .

After the play, a last visit to Atasheva, still gay and still transcribing, sending love and presents to everyone in London. And a last visit from Yutkevitch, who talked about Edward G. Robinson and an American delegation who had just arrived. And in the morning we were off to Warsaw and a different world.

Kharitonov and Belokurov outside the stage door of the Moscow Art Theatre.

the unforgiven

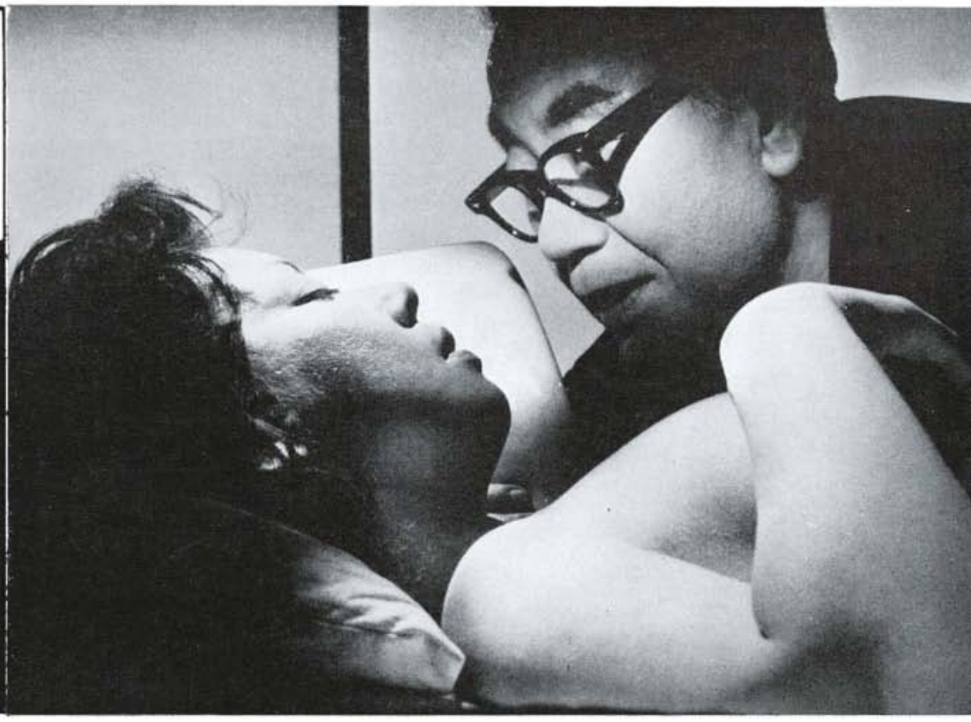
John Huston's first Western, from a novel by Alan LeMay, author of *The Searchers*, and a script by Ben Maddow, takes up one of the traditional Western themes: the lonely ranch, the isolated pioneer family cut off from their neighbours by suspicion, the Kiowa Indian raids. The cast includes Burt Lancaster, Audrey Hepburn and Audie Murphy as the younger Zacharys, Lillian Gish as their mother, Charles Bickford and Albert Salmi. The setting is Texas but the film was in fact shot near Durango, Mexico, the closest Huston has come to an American location in several years of filming.

LEFT: *John Huston and Lillian Gish.* BELOW: *the Zachary family, with Audrey Hepburn (right) and Lillian Gish.*

Japan

the younger talents

DONALD RICHIE



Ichikawa's "Kagi" (Obsession).

Mr. Richie is the author, with Joseph L. Anderson, of The Japanese Film, *published last year in America and the first authoritative work in English on the history of Japanese cinema.*

ALTHOUGH JAPAN HAS nothing equivalent to Free Cinema, the *nouvelle vague* or the young American independents, there are a number of young film directors who are just now coming into prominence. Coming into it the hard way, for such is the method of the Japanese industry, so constructed that a new and talented director does not suddenly emerge in the manner of a Chabrol or a Kubrick. Rather, the Japanese director learns the ropes from the bottom up under an apprentice system which (in theory, at any rate) ought to kill every bit of the novice's enthusiasm. It is only years later, when he becomes big enough, or important enough, or popular enough, that the studio heads can be persuaded to let him do what he wants.

Then, of course, he is usually given the moon: Mizoguchi had a personal guarantee authorising anything he cared to do; Ozu, now deified, can make anything he wants and have it fully underwritten. This may fit the Japanese pattern, in which the periods of greatest personal freedom occur in childhood and again in old age; but it also accounts for the tardy appearance of new directorial talent.

Important new directors appear only once or twice in a decade. After the war it was Kurosawa and Kinoshita; during 1938–39 it was Imai and Yoshimura; around 1932 it was Yamanaka and Itami; during the late 1920's, Toyoda and Naruse, and before that Gosho, Ozu and Mizoguchi. Thus the majority of the directors now achieving prominence are already in their forties. They have been in the industry for years, all of them, and these "new" talents are new only in the sense that they have achieved the degree of freedom necessary to realise a personal style, an individual profile. Among them, three names stand out: those of Kon Ichikawa, Masaki Kobayashi and Yasushi Nakahira.

* * *

THE AVERAGE FILM-GOING Japanese first became aware of Ichikawa when his *The Burmese Harp* (*Biruma no Tategoto*, 1955) won the 1956 San Giorgio Prize in Venice. Before this, he had been known mainly as a director of light comedies in the American manner (his *Mr. Pu*, made in 1953 and based on a cartoon character, was a popular success) and as a cartoonist. The best of his early films, a puppet version of a Kabuki dance, was banned by the Occupation authorities, Kabuki being regarded as "feudalistic". The power of *The Burmese Harp* surprised everyone, despite the fact that Nikkatsu, having originally intended a two-part film, gave it a mercilessly hack editing job.

Thereafter Ichikawa was allowed a bit more latitude. In 1956 he made for Daiei *Punishment Room* (*Shokei no Heya*), a sensational contribution to the then current juvenile delinquency cycle which included one of the most powerful rape scenes ever screened. For Toho he made *The Men of Tohoku* (*Tohoku no Zumu-tachi*, 1957), a half-documentary, half-expressionist experiment in which meticulously realistic (and often real) sets were combined with painted perspectives and frankly artificial decor. Not a success, the film was never completed but released with an entirely unconvincing ending tacked on. After this failure Ichikawa returned to Daiei, for whom he has made three films in the last two years. Their excellence should assure him permanent power in a business where power is absolutely necessary if you are going to do what you want.

The first of these was *Conflagration* (*Enjo*, 1958), shown at the Venice and London festivals last year. This was a screen version of the novel by Yukio Mishima translated as *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, about the acolyte who deliberately set fire to and destroyed Kyoto's famous Kinkakuji. The picture, through dialogue and magnificently controlled flashbacks, told the story of this boy who came to believe that he must annihilate what he most loved.

The visuals, the work of Ichikawa and Kazuo Miyagawa, the cameraman of *Rashomon*, were superb. For practically the first time CinemaScope was here used intelligently and creatively; and the textures captured in black and white were —even for Japan—beyond compare. Particularly impressive was the use of architecture. Ichikawa (and Miyagawa, who is fond of using only a portion of the wide screen) would situate their action at the far left, for example, balancing it with architectural detail which, as one scene followed the other, perfectly re-created the temple atmosphere. For one short scene Ichikawa set his student high on the balcony of the

superb Kyomizudera in Kyoto, then shot from the valley far below with a telephoto lens: the result was a dazzling bas-relief of foreshortened temple roof, the student tiny and black and lost amid the grey maze of tiles and weathered wood. Yet, always, such set-ups served primarily to emphasise the meaning of the scene. Though aesthetically prodigal, the film never exploited aestheticism for its own sake.

Just as beautiful and just as disturbing was *The Key* (*Kagi*, 1959), at present tentatively titled *Obsession* by Warner Brothers, who hold world rights in the picture. If *Conflagration* equated beauty and love and sex with destruction, *The Key* equated sex with illness, sex with medicine, sex with death. The film, based rather loosely on Junichiro Tanizaki's best-selling novel of the same name, examines the sex life of a middle-aged Kyoto couple and parallels this with the pre-marital activities of their daughter and her young doctor fiancé.

But the picture, like the novel, is only superficially interested in who goes to bed with whom and sacrifices any melodramatic possibilities by making each member of the quartet perfectly aware of what the others are doing. Thus the husband knows about, indeed encourages, the fact that the young doctor and his wife are enjoying a kind of affair; the doctor knows all about the highly irregular sex life of the married couple, as does their child; and the couple themselves are quite aware of what the youngsters are about. Not only is there listening at keyholes and peeping through *shoji*, but the husband also takes pornographic pictures of his wife, then passes them to the doctor to develop. He, in turn, shows them to the daughter; and she, saying that she can do anything her mother can, proceeds to use them as models.

Sex is almost palpable in the film, though not the scented sex of, let us say, *Les Amants*. Rather, the screen is cluttered with hypodermic needles, catheters, sex rejuvenation machines, unmade beds, loosely flung *yukata*—all filmed by Miyagawa in some of the most magnificently muted colour ever to reach the screen. Sex becomes so sordid, and is presented with such near-claustrophobic intensity, that one longs for outdoor scenes, anything to get away from that dark and keyholed and magnificently photographed house. Yet this quality accounts for the power of this very powerful film: the spectator is made a *voyeur*.

More, he is made a participant. Although all the principals know at least as much as the spectator, nothing is ever discussed, nothing is brought into the open; rather, everything is hidden, secreted away. The film becomes remarkably suggestive as one double meaning follows another, until finally it verges on prurience. There is an extraordinary scene in which the husband has a stroke while making love to his wife, and from then on he is paralysed, unable to move or talk, while the members of his family cavort in front of him.

Yet, despite all this, *The Key* is never meretricious. Unlike other Japanese efforts, titillation is not the ultimate intention. Ichikawa is telling us something unpleasant, certainly, but none the less true: a new interpretation of the love-death theme, in which some of the most sordid of human actions are captured by means of the sheerest visual beauty.

Fires on the Plain (*Nobi*, 1959) is taken from the war novel by Shohei O-oka and is frankly concerned with death and with that last refuge of desire, cannibalism. It, too, says much more than a mere précis of the story-line might indicate. Again the film contributes a studied and controlled visual style—fully half of the picture is without dialogue—which, like all strong styles, creates a world of its own, one which forces our sympathy and enmeshes our emotions. That we experience no revulsion—and the major theme of the last third of the film is the eating of human flesh—is due entirely to the quality of the script (written, as are all Ichikawa's scripts, by his wife, Wada Nato), to the director's honesty and to the at times appalling beauty of the images.

Few films have more lucidly reflected the daily horrors which make up the catastrophe of war: the slow march through the forest, a plane approaches, all fall to the ground; the plane passes, only half the men rise to stagger on, and not one looks back; the shot of a man tasting salt for the first time in months, an involuntary tear running down his cheek; an encounter with a dying soldier on a mountain top, the soldier eating the earth he himself has soiled; the long marches in the rain, when the shoes discarded by one soldier are retrieved by another whose own are even worse; men dead on their haunches, like animals, with even the dignity of death taken from them.

Although these three films are not without flaws (*Conflagration* has some awkward scenes; *The Key* has a ridiculous ending; *Fires on the Plain* is paced so slowly that many have found it dull), they do represent an entirely new direction for the Japanese film. More important, they are perfectly valid emotional experiences in their own right. They unmistakably establish the 44-year-old Kon Ichikawa as one of Japan's finest directors.

* * *

Masaki Kobayashi, now forty-three, has made relatively few films and is known to the public mainly as the director of the enormously long, meticulously detailed and extremely powerful *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no Joken*). This film covers Jumpei Gomikawa's best-selling six volume novel in three parts, of which two (both three hours long) have so far been released in Japan. The third and final section is at present in its pre-production stage. A story of the Manchurian war, this is probably the first war film to show the Japanese army as it actually was. Inevitably, it has become one of the most controversial productions ever made in Japan.

Through its trenchant criticism of the army, *The Human Condition* by extension comments on the entire Japanese system of organisation. These are issues which vitally concern Kobayashi and his work has all been more or less controversial. Unlike Ichikawa's, his films are not fully contained stylistic entities but a kind of journalism; and since Kurosawa gave up contemporary subjects for period drama he has become Japan's first social critic.

His *Thick-Walled Room* (*Kabe Atsuki Heya*, 1953) was considered so inflammatory that Shochiku did not release it until

"Black River": the final sequence of death on the highway.

three years after its completion. Based on published abstracts from the diaries of "war criminals", it had as its theme the idea that most of those imprisoned were innocent while the real criminals had escaped. Though the theme itself is highly debatable, this was still one of the few Japanese films to raise the question of responsibility for the war.

Other films highly critical of Japanese standards were *I'll Buy You* (*Anata Kaimasu*, 1956) an exposé of the commercialisation of the Japanese baseball world, with rival teams outbidding each other for the services of a high-school star, and *Black River* (*Kuroi Kawa*). Made in 1957, this had as its subject the corruption centering on American bases in Japan, the whores, pimps, petty gamblers and gangsters who preyed on the military.

Particularly brilliant was the final reel of this film, which has never been exported and is not even described in the Shochiku export catalogue, perhaps because it was thought that foreigners might be offended. It is a rainy night and the jerry-built bars and pin-ball parlours, cheap restaurants and souvenir shops which have grown up round the camp entrance look like a deserted amusement park. The young gangster, dead drunk, is being taken home by the girl he has seduced and who is now his mistress. There is an argument and he races off down the long, rain-slicked highway. Along the road comes a convoy of American trucks. He slips in front of one of them and is killed. The girl drops her open umbrella and rushes towards him; and the final shot shows the umbrella on the highway while she, crying, runs towards the stationary trucks. The entire sequence, extremely ironic in the film's context, is made up of short shots, gathering a momentum rare in Japanese films to stop abruptly on the long-held final image.

A lively exposition which might easily have been a static indictment, *Black River* was studiously just in its conclusions. The villain was not America for the presence of her camps, but the Japanese social system which permitted lawlessness to go unpunished and even officially unnoticed. Perhaps the strongest of Kobayashi's films, this one shares with the others a very real ethical concern—a quality rare in all films and particularly in those of Japan.

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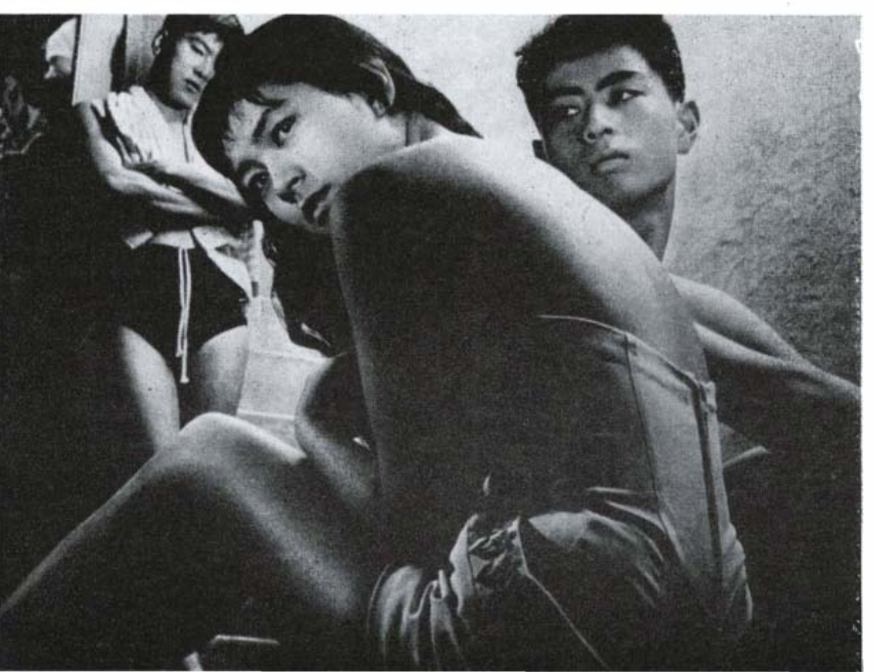
Yasushi Nakahira, only thirty-three and the youngest of the newly prominent directors, has not yet achieved Ichikawa's style or Kobayashi's singleness of purpose. But he has brought a much-needed quality to Japanese films: lightness of touch and a desire to experiment.

His first film as a director was *Crazed Fruit* (*Kurutta Kajitsu*), made in 1956 and easily the best of that year's juvenile delinquency cycle. About two brothers who perhaps simultaneously and certainly repeatedly enjoy the favours of the same girl, the picture brilliantly caught the atmosphere of a second-rate summer resort, the hesitant arrogance of adolescents, the animality of the young, the setting of the shining sea and sun-drenched seascapes. The finale, in which the younger brother runs down and kills both elder brother and girl in a high-powered speedboat, was a beautifully constructed impressionistic montage—and a necessary effect, since the makers of this low-budget film could not afford actually to destroy the yacht. *Crazed Fruit*, incidentally, turned up in Europe under the title of *Juvenile Passion*, the sexiness of the triangle and some incidental touches of brutality having guaranteed foreign buyers.



"Juvenile Passion": "... the hesitant arrogance of adolescents."

Two years later, in *The Four Seasons of Love* (*Shiki no Aiyoku*), Nakahira created a really indigenous light comedy. Like the older Keisuke Kinoshita, he realised that the Japanese family system has almost unlimited comic possibilities; and the entire point of this wryly funny film was the conservatism of the new generation when compared with their parents. Here the children all think that mother should stay at home, should be given to self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, gentleness and tears. In this they get little co-operation, their mother being determined to lead her own life. The children, loathsome little puritans all, are aghast; though not themselves above suspicion, they keep their own affairs secret, feel sorry for themselves and ashamed. At the end of the film, they are assembled at the railway station: mother, they think, has seen the error of her ways and is returning. They prepare suitable faces, hurt but brave, as the train pulls in. Mother is on it all right, but she is not alone. She is with a gentleman friend on her way to a hot springs resort. The children are horrified, Mother smiles sweetly and continues feeding the gentleman *sake*, the whistle blows and the train moves off. The children are left looking after it, aware for the first time that they are left out, are missing something . . .

Nakahira's most recent film is *The Assignation* (*Mitsukai*, 1959), a sixty-five minute picture in which he shows what he can do with straight romance. That a director of his calibre should be allowed only the lower half of a double-bill, should have to create within the dimensions of a featurette, perhaps also indicates what the Japanese film-maker has to put up with. Nikkatsu, its policy orientated towards its stars, is not particularly interested in the capabilities of its directors. Yet, despite disinterest at top-level, Nakahira can turn even a low-budget short feature into something meaningful.

The opening of *The Assignation* is particularly well done. This is a six-minute sequence without cuts, one long scene showing a married woman and her lover, a young student, lying on the ground at dusk in a deserted park. The scene is so intimate as to be almost embarrassing, but Nakahira confines himself entirely to the single set-up, both actors cut off at the waist. The suggestive quality lies entirely in the acting and in the slow, sinuous movement of the camera itself. Later, at the end of the film, the wife, fearful of disclosure, impulsively pushes the student under a train. Here again, as in the final sequence of *Crazed Fruit*, Nakahira uses a most convincing impressionistic technique, creating his action through a number of extremely short shots: close-ups of the two faces, of the wife's hand, the student's foot slipping, his body turning as he falls, the train above them . . . Finally, we see the train over-shooting the station and then the track: a very long-held shot of the student, dead, just head and shoulders at one side of the frame and at the other, at an impossible angle, his foot.

* * *

These three directors have each achieved a personal style, a vision of the world: they have come of age. Among those who are still on the way up is Yasuzo Masumura, also thirty-three, who studied at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome and has worked under both Ichikawa and Mizoguchi. He is some-

" Fires on the Plain ": Japanese defeat in the Philippines.

what like Kobayashi in his preference for films of social comment and, when he can get his company to give them to him, does well. Such a film was *Giants and Toys* (*Kyojinto Gangu*, 1958), an extremely fast-moving exposé of the Japanese advertising racket which was shown abroad as *The Big Build-Up*. Masumura, though, has yet to show what he can really do. His *The Precipice* (*Kyoheki*, 1958), shown out of competition at Cannes, had a ridiculous script, and even when he gets a good one the company sometimes doctors it out of all recognition. Like many talented young directors, he has yet to shake himself free of his company.

There is much less company interference in the enormous field of educational films and here young directors can do more or less what they want. Among them is Susumu Hani, not yet thirty, who won the Robert Flaherty Award with his *Children Who Draw* (*E o Kaku Kodomotachi*, 1957). Only ostensibly purporting to be about child psychology, this was actually a loving glimpse into the world of the child itself. Using a telephoto lens for intimate close-ups, it shows us things as seen by children and is one of the few productions successfully to have captured a child's view.

Hani's best documentary, though, has never been publicly shown in Japan since the company for which he works considered it too experimental. This is *The Horyu Temple* (*Horyu-ji*, 1958). From the opening scene (a magnificent full colour helicopter shot of the entire ninth century temple compound) to the last long-held shots, each one further from the Horyu-ji itself, this is a real poetic documentary. Very introspective in tone, it refuses to show any of the famous tourist views. Rather, it explores the ceilings of little outlying temples to discover caricatures drawn by carpenters of the ninth century; it disregards all the big, famous statuary to call attention to tiny figures veiling a transom or supporting a dais and utterly unnoticed by the casual visitor to the temple. It is an extremely personal film, yet after seeing it one has understood much about Horyu-ji itself.

Independent production is very rare in Japan. Usually a smaller company finances a film and one of the big five releases it, and the forming of a company for the express purpose of making one film is unknown. Thus everything is sieved through the industry itself, the exception being the films of Japan's small but active amateur movement and of film-makers in the universities. It is from here, indeed, that most new directors originally come. Nihon University, for example, has an active film unit which last year produced an original 16mm. surrealist picture called *Conversations Between a Nail and a Stocking*. Directed by a fourth-year student, Hiro Taniyama, and about a possessed student and his mocking alter ego, the film aimed at a sense of suicidal despair. It was dark and derivative (*Dom* had just been shown in Japan, and the unit were thoroughly familiar with a set of stills from Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète*); but at the same time it indicated the desire to experiment which is present in every Japanese director.

That few of these experiments ever reach the commercial screen is due almost entirely to the decades of inferior production to which a director must lend himself before he can achieve a kind of independence. As in any country, the orientation of the industry is not towards experiment; and that so many films of quality do appear is due entirely to the vision and energy and courage of the directors themselves—of those film-makers like Ichikawa who have achieved independence and of those like Masumura who will fight for their talent.

ORSON WELLES

photo: J. R. V. Johnson

Conversation at Oxford

BY

DERICK GRIGS

WHEN *The Lady from Shanghai* was revived yet again in Oxford last January, it was hard to realise that its chubby but comparatively lightweight hero was now incorporated in the Wagnerian figure who had made his first appearance at an Oxford Union debate the week before. There is something operatic about the resonant bass as well as the physique of Orson Welles. Magnificent in midnight-blue dinner jacket and Chinese silk waistcoat, he faced a house that was even more painfully crowded than on the occasion of the Prime Minister's visit during the previous term.

No doubt it was Welles' personality and his record as much as his eloquence that secured the massive defeat (485 to 309) of the motion "that this House holds America responsible for spreading vulgarity in Western society"; this despite what he called the 'Unionship' of Stephen Potter on the other side. But for a few fortunate cineastes and journalists, this Union victory was only a curtain-raiser to a performance which continued in a neighbouring hotel lounge until 4.30 in the morning. There, tirelessly, Welles held court with a vast cigar, made to measure, as a sceptre. Except when he granted audience to a deputation of boxing Blues (he is "a great lover of the fancy"), he talked and talked and talked on America, politics, the Press, the theatre; and above all, of course, on the cinema.

It might be tempting to deduce a charlatan from some of Welles' work in films, but in conversation the man is direct, outspoken and obviously sincere. His expression might be ironic, his opinions dogmatic, his comments on some of his contemporaries devastatingly uncomplimentary, but that night the most supercilious reporter acknowledged his friendliness and his honesty.

* * *

At that time Welles was preoccupied with his plans for the theatre. A production of Ionesco's *The Rhinoceros* at the Royal Court, with Laurence Olivier, Joan Plowright and perhaps Peter Sellers, is already announced for April; and he was busy with Shakespearian plans for both Dublin and London. These involved an assembly of the Falstaff scenes from both parts of *Henry IV*: "Not the sort of thing a national theatre could do, but a maverick like me can get away with it." Much the same might be said of his projected *Twelfth Night* in "Wodehouse style", with himself as Jeeves-Malvolio, surrounded by an assortment of Drones.

He planned to film the Prince Hal–Falstaff episodes in Yugoslavia; but the recent evidence of revived anti-Semitism had induced him to drop, for the time being, a projected *Merchant of Venice*, in which he would himself play Shylock.

Welles recently finished a film called *Don Quixote's Trip to the Moon*. He described this as "odd", withholding further details. A Russian invitation to film the Bolshoi Ballet in *The Nutcracker Suite* had not interested him. He told us relatively little about his own work; but today, it appears, the cinema attracts him chiefly as a producer, much less as a consumer.

"I can't enjoy seeing a film any more," he said. "The magic has gone. I keep seeing that damn clapper-board, the projectionist behind and the dead screen in front. It's something to do with my hatred of all machinery. It's different in the theatre. There anything can happen: it probably won't, but you believe it can. The actors remake it every night; at any moment they may take off, they may levitate.

"I've hardly seen any of my own films. No, not even *Kane* . . . Well, I spent a year cutting it and saw it 7,000 times, but never since. I can't bear to see myself up there; I keep noticing things I want to change. When I made *Kane* I had a sort of innocent assurance. I hadn't learnt what you aren't supposed to be able to do.

"In handling a camera I feel that I have no peer. But what de Sica can do, that I can't do. I ran his *Shoeshine* again recently and the camera disappeared, the screen disappeared; it was just life . . .

"Italy is a country of marvellous actors, of which the worst are on the screen. They can do anything, so long as you print

the first take. After that, they start copying the actors. You couldn't do this in France. There the people are more like the English, in a way; they are self-conscious."

Rather too much commotion had been made, Welles thought, about the *nouvelle vague* in France. " Some of them are competent, and there are good things in their films, but they're not really new." French directors he admires are apparently mainly the veterans: Clair ("a real master: he invented his own Paris, which is better than recording it . . . any fool can leave the camera open"), Pagnol, and Carné ("a *petit maitre* but a true craftsman: he knows what he's doing").

Bresson's films he could not stand: "I walked into *Pickpocket*—right off the street, without knowing what it was. After a couple of reels I said 'My God, this is a Bresson film!' and I walked out." His opinion of Rossellini's work was no more flattering. And Ingmar Bergman he disliked without knowing why, as instinctively as disliking a woman. "His films leave me cold, they say nothing to me."

Welles agreed that none of these judgments would be endorsed by *Cahiers du Cinéma*, one of whose current idols he is. "But when I say things like this, they put it down to the eccentricity of genius, I guess."

His opinion of some Hollywood talent was equally dismissive. "In Hollywood there are utter incompetents who have been directors for thirty years. All you need is the job. You are surrounded with such wonderful craftsmen that you can't go wrong, so long as you keep you mouth shut . . ." Of one celebrated Oscar-winning director, he said: "He tells the actors nothing. He does about forty-five takes of every scene, then prints the right one. His taste is perfect, but the actors have to be very patient. In the end they do what he wants and has never told them . . ."

But his comments were not entirely critical. John Ford was "a real director: he makes them do just what he wants, then prints the first or second take." Carol Reed was "another real director with a fine visual sense—though less sense of the architecture of a plot." Alexander Korda, Welles said, had contributed immensely towards *The Third Man*. "The whole story, the conception and setting, were really Korda's. He just got Greene to write it—and I wrote my own part."

Contrary to rumour, Welles said that he did not consider that his most recently released film, *Touch of Evil*, had been badly mutilated. It was, on the contrary, one of the pictures which had come out closest to his own intentions. *Confidential Report*, on the other hand, was hardly recognisable in its final form. "I made it with a friend—at least he used to be a friend —and what he did to me was worse than anything Harry Cohn did to *The Lady from Shanghai* . . ." He could not, he said, forget the advice of an old producer: 'You'll never die broke if you under-estimate the public'. "I've been worrying about it for fifteen years," Welles said. But his conviction remains unshaken that there are two things which have no place in the cinema: "prayer and pornography".

But to keep Welles talking only about the cinema was impossible. He mentioned the Hollywood blacklist, dismissing as a legend the theory that many people in Hollywood were framed for alleged un-American activities. "Most of those sacked were card-carrying Communists. Not that this justifies sacking them; in a free country a man should be free to express any opinion. The people who disgusted me were the big boys who named their comrades just to keep their swimming pools." He had himself known McCarthy: "a charming man, and no one who knew him well will tell you different. He was a villain, but the press which reported him was mainly to blame . . ."

Of the press in general: "The British popular press has the lowest reputation in the world—and I speak as a cosmopolitan. It doesn't do what I expect of a newspaper. I don't want to be entertained. I want to be informed. Another thing I hate is these interviews in depth, as they call them, where some public personality is made to look ridiculous. To take some pretty, sexy girl who doesn't pretend to be anything else and make a fool of her—this is horrible . . ."

Of criticism: "I would rather have no criticisms, good or bad. If only I could have two years without notices, I believe I could take a giant step forward."

Of morality: "A bourgeois phenomenon. Do you ever discover it in the proletariat or the aristocracy?"

Finally, and obliquely, he came back to the cinema, in a tantalising reference to his own correspondence with Eisenstein. "It all started with a bad notice I gave to *Ivan the Terrible*. To my surprise, I received a 2,000 word letter answering my criticisms in detail. I was flattered and wrote back, and we exchanged several letters. I must try to find them. The Eisenstein part of the correspondence would be worth publishing . . ."

THE SEVENTH ART

GUARANTEED THE TINGLER will break loose in the theatre while YOU are in the audience. As you enter the theatre you will receive instructions . . . how to guard yourself against attack by the tingler . . . Bring your date and watch her tingle. (From promotion campaign for *The Tingler: Motion Picture Herald.*)

*

A unique experience in Motion Picture Terror! So different—a Bell System Has Been Installed for the SQUEAMISH and FAINT-HEARTED!!! When the Bell Rings, we suggest you CLOSE YOUR EYES! It will ring again when it's safe to open them. (Advertisement in *Film Daily* for *Terror is a Man.*)

*

Tyrone Power, Errol Flynn, Gérard Philipe had to die: the heart has burst. You, too, should listen to the call of your body. Take now the outstandingly valuable cure—10.50 DM all included—at Pension Lieber Augustin . . . (Advertisement in *Main-Echo*, Aschaffenburg.)

*

During a scene in *Bed of Grass* in which she is raped in a wheatfield she was actually in anguish. Due to the hot, dry climate all the wheatfields in the province where the film was shot are stubbled, and the sharp bits were piercing Anna's back so much that when she finally stood up she was covered with blood and staggering with pain . . .

In the hope of finding an actor whose face would be noble enough to convince the audiences he wouldn't take advantage of a girl sleeping in the same room with him, the director scoured Greece without success. He was haunted by a face but could not place where he had seen it until he met his own art director . . . and he was immediately cast for the role of the doctor. (Extracts from the publicity bulletin for *Bed of Grass.*)

*

In Tuskegee, Ala., birthplace of the Tuskegee Institute (for Negroes), the Macon Theatre had the last word in separate but equal cinema. The separate ticket offices, separate entrances, and separate concessions were as old as midnight popcorn, but there was an added feature: a ceiling-to-floor partition, running down the middle of the auditorium. There were 324 seats on the white side and 336 seats on the coloured side. Up front: two separate but equal silver screens. (*Time.*)

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Unusual story, clever acting, startling treatment, fluent subtitles, authentic backgrounds and terrific snob values. (*Kinematograph Weekly:* "Points of Appeal" of *Hiroshima mon Amour.*)

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It may be that some years from now we can look back and say '*On the Beach* is the picture that saved the world . . .' (Dr. Linus Pauling, Nobel Prize Winner for Chemistry.)

Views of the New Wave

During the last year or so, forty new and mainly young directors have been able to make films in France. It is difficult to keep up with the fantastic output of a movement which has changed the entire face of the French cinema, but the second half of the current French Season at the National Film Theatre will introduce some of these films to British audiences. Godard, Rohmer and Hanoun, the three directors discussed here, are all new names: more will be heard from them.

Jean Seberg in "A Bout de Souffle".

Godard: A BOUT DE SOUFFLE
Rohmer: LE SIGNE DU LION

JEAN-LUC GODARD, WHO was born of Swiss descent 29 years ago but who is Parisian by adoption, made his first feature film, *A Bout de Souffle*, on a modest budget of some £30,000. He was lucky enough to be able to work without any external restraint, in spite of the fact that his star was the fairly important young American actress Jean Seberg, borrowed from Columbia Pictures to whom she is under contract. The male lead, Jean-Paul Belmondo, appeared in Claude Chabrol's *A Double Tour* and had earlier played in an extraordinary short feature, *Charlotte et son Jules*, also made by Godard. The credits of *A Bout de Souffle* list François Truffaut as screenwriter and Claude Chabrol as "artistic supervisor"; but this was done for the benefit of the technicians' union and, in fact, Chabrol had little more to do with the film than to lend it his name, while Truffaut's contribution was the discovery of a news snippet which became the starting point of the plot. *A Bout de Souffle* is therefore a genuine *film d'auteur*—more so than either *Les Quatre Cents Coups* or *Hiroshima mon Amour*, to which the screenwriters made powerful contributions. Godard is a lone wolf; he expresses himself with the absolute independence of a novelist, yet with a discipline and style, in the literary sense, which make his film perhaps the most perfectly realised screen novel produced to date.

Many spectators, especially English ones, may not take his film very seriously when they see how much it owes to American techniques, to comedies and gangster movies. (The

film is wryly dedicated to Monogram Pictures!) The serious filmgoer in London or Oxford, New York or Boston, may well be shocked by the ingrained vulgarity of the theme and by the characters Godard has chosen to portray. The story deals with the adventures of a car thief, Michel, who kills a highway policeman and goes back to Paris to spend the night making love to his American girl friend Patricia (Jean Seberg). Patricia then gives him away to the police: she doesn't want to spend all her life with him and hopes that by informing on him she can force him to move on. But Michel refuses to go, and is shot down in the street by the police, while Patricia watches.

The film is wildly cruel and pitilessly anarchic. The social order is violently repudiated; love is impossible; death is imminent . . . the film takes on a tragic coloration, but this is achieved without embroidery or affectation. Godard, who admires the work both of Nicholas Ray and of Mizoguchi, rejects traditional techniques, sets out to be provocative, plays continually on shock effects. He uses a form of montage which could be irritating if overworked, but which is here held under strict control and achieves miracles: Patricia is talking to Michel; the camera never leaves her face, but by cutting and closing up this single sequence, Godard takes the viewer into a breathless, tumbling daze of a scene.

At the end, Michel is on the ground, dying in front of the policeman who has shot him down. Patricia rushes up to him, and his last words are: "*Tu es dégueulasse.*" The final shot is a close-up of Jean Seberg frenziedly asking the policeman: "*Qu'est-ce que c'est que dégueulasse?*"

Vulgar language which may well raise a few pious eyebrows; but it is exactly in keeping with the situation, and this is made many times more effective by the scrupulous care given to photography, acting and direction. We are in the world of the unreal, outside literature, outside sermonising: in a world of total immorality, lived skin-deep. This is the opposite pole, obviously, from the Brechtian concept of committed art; and Godard is himself explicit about this. "For the artist, to know himself too well is to give way, to some extent, to facility. The difficult thing is to advance into unknown territory, to be aware of the danger, to take risks, to be afraid . . . The cinema is not a trade. It isn't team-work. One is always alone while shooting, as though facing a blank page."

Like *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, *A Bout de Souffle* was filmed entirely in Paris, a modern, largely Americanised Paris. One can challenge the irresponsibility of this kind of cinema, but not the talent of a young artist whose revelations are so startling that they demand attention. The dialogue is dense and highly literary, but it does not aim at effects for effects' sake; and it indicates that Godard, who in his articles as a critic writes a language worthy of Giraudoux, is up to the standard of the uncommitted "*Jeune Droite*" novelists, writers such as Antoine Blondin, a recent prize-winner for his excellent *Un Singe en Hiver*. Instead of writing a novel, Godard *writes* a film.

Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* also cost about £30,000 to make. Both films were made with complete spontaneity, practically without a shooting script, and with improvised creation which might depend on the mood of the day, the circumstances and the settings. But Rohmer, who is ten years older than Godard, is inevitably more thoughtful and stands much further back from his subject. *Le Signe du Lion*, sponsored by Claude Chabrol and his first full-length feature, shows that he is a great deal nearer the forefront of modern cinema. Godard is still concerned to create a new kind of literature, to comment lucidly on the confusions of an anarchic generation. Rohmer is doing something different. He is, in my opinion, the first genuine exponent of what might be called "the cinema of pure behaviour".

His theme is simple: a bohemian musician, half-American, half-European—the part is played by Jess Hahn—learns that he is the heir to an aunt who has just died in Vienna. He borrows money from his friends in Saint-Germain des Prés to tide him over until the inheritance comes through. But the news turns out to be false: the inheritance was a hoax. All his friends are now away on vacation. He is alone, penniless, in a hot, dry, tourist-crammed Paris. The real subject of the film, then, is the gradual decline of an individual living on his wits in an environment from which he is somehow isolated. Our musician becomes a tramp, sleeping on the banks of the Seine. Finally, his friends find him again, bringing the news that the inheritance is now real . . . The film ends on a roar of laughter, a rather sinister touch when one reflects that the whole business will probably begin all over again.

The film's framework is fragile, and it should not be judged only on its probability. You can condemn the hero for not being able to find some kind of a job. You can drag up dim memories of Murnau's *The Last Laugh* and Renoir's *Boudu Sauvé des Eaux*, both films by directors whom Rohmer admires. But it is in other respects that his film shows its originality: in its ultra-realistic technique, its extreme objectivity in portraying the friction set up between a human being and society, his wearing down, his slow degradation. This is not a descriptive but a rigorously visual art. It calls for the complete participation of the viewer and his submission to what he sees. One is reminded of Albert Camus's novel *L'Etranger*, because the situation of the main character is equally extreme: he is outside society. In this case he is up against not words but stone, water, the sky; and with him we make an infinite number of discoveries: the walls of Paris, its monuments, the Seine. At certain moments the hidden camera has caught ordinary people passing by, living in their own worlds, knowing nothing of the misery of the man they pass in the street. Jess Hahn rummages in a litter bin; the sole of his shoe flaps; no one takes any notice . . . A cruel study, but never a sentimental one. Rohmer makes his points objectively: "*ne prétendant que montrer, il nous dispense de la fraude de dire*," as he once wrote himself about Buster Keaton. The dialogue is almost negligible; the interest is concentrated on human attitudes. It is a disquieting film; and the contribution of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* group of new directors (Truffaut, Chabrol, Godard as well as Rohmer himself) has partly been to disquiet, though without really facing the challenge of a corrupt social order.

LOUIS MARCORELLES

Study in isolation: Jess Hahn in "Le Signe du Lion".

MARCEL HANOUN

Une Simple Histoire

"Une Simple Histoire": Micheline Bezançon.

Une Simple Histoire, *which will probably be shown during the current French season at the National Film Theatre, is the first film of Marcel Hanoun, a young French director born in Tunis. It was made for the French television service, was directed, photographed and written by Hanoun, and at Cannes last year won the Grand Prix de l'Eurovision. In contrast to this low-budget venture, Hanoun has since completed a commercially-budgeted feature,* Le Huitième Jour, *which stars Emmanuelle Riva, Felix Martens and an exciting new discovery, José Varela. The film cost sixty million francs, and inevitably Hanoun was not allowed a completely free hand. As a result, this story of how love comes to two timid people is not as personal an expression as Hanoun's earlier film*

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, a director's response to other men's films is likely to be conditioned by his own approach to the problems of form. When I asked Marcel Hanoun to name his favourite films, he answered: *Le Silence de la Mer, Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne, Hiroshima mon Amour.* All three are characterised by an organic use of narration. In *Journal d'un Curé,* the voice of the young priest recounting the day's events accompanies the unfolding of these events on the screen: Bresson is concerned to communicate the intensity of a single point of view. In common with many modern novelists, Bresson and Resnais feel that one person's view of reality is all that can be truthfully or successfully expressed. The omniscience of the traditional cinema is abandoned and the angle of vision becomes paramount.

In Hanoun's own *Une Simple Histoire* the subjective viewpoint is sustained continuously by his heroine's narration. But polyphonically, as it were, another line runs along simultaneously: the dialogue and the images offer an objectively realistic account of the events the heroine is relating. Both lines interact, and it is from this interaction that Hanoun's highly individual film derives its special tension.

The film's plot, as simple as the title suggests, originated in a news item. A woman and her little girl come to Paris from Lille. They stay a few days with a friend, then move from one cheap hotel to another while the mother looks for work. She is unsuccessful, and when her money is gone, she and the child spend the night in a field just outside the gates of Paris. The next morning a woman in one of the neighbouring council flats sees them from her window and offers to take them in. This finding of a temporary shelter is all the resolution Hanoun gives his situation. The story itself is told by the mother in flashback: the experience is over, as it were, before it has really begun.

An almost newsreel harshness in the location photography reconstitutes the neutral look of the woman's surroundings, just as the totally untheatrical performance of Micheline Bezançon urges us to recognise the immediacy of her plight. Quietly and unsentimentally, the actress renders the set look of someone racked with worry, the empty lassitude of a woman who has searched hopelessly all day for work and who must then return to the evening's ordeal of her sordid hotel room. From the street come the voices of people out for the evening, on their way to cafés, dance halls, cinemas.

But the film's tensile strength is in its double vision. While the mother tells us what she did, what she said, and what others said to her, we see these things happen and hear these words spoken. For example, a man tries to pick her up in the street. She tells us that a man stopped her one day, asked her where she came from, did she know anyone in Paris, was she married. To her this was a minor irritation: she was concerned only with finding work before her money ran out. To the man, however, it was a somewhat exciting encounter. All this is conveyed by Hanoun with maximum economy. As the woman tonelessly tells us what the man said, we hear him, almost simultaneously, asking his eager questions: Do you know anyone in Paris? Are you married?

Plainly, *Une Simple Histoire* is not just another Zavattini-like exercise in neo-realism. Hanoun is not primarily interested in the social aspects of his subject. And there is another important respect in which his film differs from the traditional Zavattini-de Sica product. Like Bresson, Hanoun has tried to strip the cinema of inessentials. He has pursued a similar ideal to that of the post-war generation of French novelists, who have harkened to Paul Valéry's complaint that novels are always being cluttered up with sentences like "The Marquise went out to tea at five o'clock," and have sought to develop an elliptical style. No time here is wasted on transitions, establishing shots, linking shots or any kind of anecdotal filling in. Acting, too, is reduced to a minimum. Where de Sica used amateurs and got professional performances from them, Hanoun uses a professional and gets a performance which seems affectingly unacted.

Such is the fascination of his rigorous construction, the intricate relationship between dialogue and narration, sound and image, and the stripped-down quality of this spare, concentrated film, that *Une Simple Histoire* becomes one of those rare pictures in which form means as much as content—just as in a painting by Matisse the relationship between a certain shade of red and a darker shade of green is as meaningful as the subject matter. Can form be as important in the cinema as content? This kind of film tempts one to answer that it can.

RICHARD ROUD

Film Reviews

THE BOYARS' PLOT

EISENSTEIN ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED *Ivan the Terrible* in two parts; but, as had happened before in his career, a single episode (The Boyars' Plot) grew into an entire film. He planned to conclude his reconstruction of the life of Ivan IV in a third part, to be shot in colour. He was destined never to fulfil his intention; and the story of the ten years' suppression of *The Boyars' Plot*, released in 1958 as part of the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of Eisenstein's birth (and the tenth of his death), is well known.

Ivan was only one of a whole group of historical films made in the early 'forties and designed as a great patriotic demonstration. To the official mind Eisenstein's film had fallen short of the propaganda needs it was required to fulfil. But Eisenstein was subtler than the official mind: one can no more imagine him making his Ivan a propaganda stereotype than one can now regret his not having done so.

Ivan, it is true, is far from being a simple character. Only gradually does he overcome his personal and religious doubts; not until halfway through *The Boyars' Plot*—and then under provocation—does he confirm his resolution: "Henceforth I will be that which you name me—TERRIBLE!"

I think it is misleading to try, as some critics have done, to draw too close comparisons between Eisenstein's personal life and his conception of Ivan. Any creator is bound to lend something of his personal experience to his creations. Nor do I think that direct comparisons between Ivan and Stalin are justified. Much more likely hints of the complex and interesting character with which Eisenstein clothed the historical figure of Ivan are to be found in literary sources. For instance, one can profitably seek clues in the trilogy of historical plays by the minor nineteenth century poet Alexei Konstantinovitch Tolstoi. Eisenstein's trilogy would have ended where Tolstoi's began, with *The Death of Ivan the Terrible.*

There are direct resemblances. The two statesmen squabble above the head of the boy Ivan just as Shuisky and Godunov brawled for power behind the throne of the simpleton Feodor. The scene in which the Boyaritsa Euphrosinia Staritskaia comforts her frightened son, the unwilling pretender, has its direct counterpart in the closing scene of *Tsar Feodor*, with the timid, simple little monarch resting his head on his wife's lap:

What's to be done?
I was not born for kingship!

Eisenstein never acknowledged a debt to these plays; though in his recantation after the criticisms of *The Boyars' Plot* he attributed some of his "errors" to his memories of the same author's *Prince Serebryani.*

Whatever its origins, Eisenstein's idea of Ivan was of a Titanic figure living in Titanic times. Dramatically *The Boyars' Plot* is much more tightly composed than the first part of the film. It is essentially a single episode; the first sequence—the traitor Kurbsky at the court of Sigismund of Poland—seems, splendid though it is, like an intrusion. Ivan returns to Moscow and challenges the Boyars' power. Urged on by his plebeian bodyguard, the *Oprichniki* (Men Apart), he executes the Kolychevs, kin of the Archbishop Philip. The Archbishop expresses his defiance by staging in the Uspensky Cathedral a miracle play which draws unmistakable parallels between Ivan and Nebuchadnezzar. Philip is arrested; the Boyaritsa Euphrosinia Staritskaia and Archbishop Pimen plot to assassinate Ivan as he goes to mass. Ivan invites Euphrosinia's son, the pretender Vladimir, to a feast, gets him drunk, dresses him in the regalia, and forces him to lead the procession to the cathedral. The assassin Peter Volynets, Pimen's novice, strikes Vladimir in mistake for Ivan.

This action is developed in a series of great *tableaux*, each beginning deliberately and slowly, then heightening to a quick, powerful dramatic climax: the flashback to show the infant Tsar throwing off his regents; the execution of the three boyars; the strange ambivalences of the Furnace Play; the primitive wildness of the feast, with Ivan's favourite, Fedya, dressed as a girl; best of all, the irony of the assassination and the astonishment of the monstrous Euphrosinia, faced with the living Ivan, whom she takes for a ghost . . .

"The Boyars' Plot": Vladimir leads the procession into the cathedral.

The outstanding quality of the film is Eisenstein's conception of what is practically a new medium, to suit his narrative. He appears as the complete inventor and creator. Everything is subordinated to the total effect; and the total effect is a wholly original compound of Eisenstein's lifetime of intellectual, artistic, sensual explorations. There are echoes from opera and Kabuki, from ancient Russian frescoes and ikons, from ecclesiastical imagery, from Goya and Rembrandt and El Greco and Repin, from the puppet theatre and the nineteenth century drama as well as from Rublev and Feofan and the old Russian masters.

In this film, Eisenstein had practically realised his ideal of the ensemble of the means of filmic expression. "Each in its own place. Each as the vehicle for a certain dramaturgically unique moment. Each as the most perfect expressive element of the general idea at the moment it unfolds. The impact of the expressive means proceeds in chords."

Perhaps in no other film has the musical score played so integral a role. At times of highest drama, the score often takes over, "the vehicle for a dramaturgically unique moment": in the execution of the boyars, for instance, or the dreadful sound of tearing linen that marks the assassination of Vladimir. Often the work of Eisenstein and Prokofiev is indivisible. Eisenstein tells us that the precedence of composition varied. Sometimes Prokofiev devised the pattern, the emotional structure of a sequence, and Eisenstein edited his film to it; at other times the order was reversed, Prokofiev moulding his score to the images.

It is perhaps true to say that Prokofiev was Eisenstein's sole *collaborator*. The other artists, one suspects, were completely subjugated to Eisenstein's mastering conception. Isaac Spinel, a veteran art director, is credited with set design, and Naumova and Safunova with the costumes; but Eisenstein drew minute drawings—

hundreds of them—for everything. Hardly a frame of film, or the fall of a cloak or the tilt of a beard, was not anticipated by the director, in his little drawings, as part of the complex, dynamic composition of edited images which are often, in themselves, practically static.

The actors are, on the whole, as much a part of the design as the cloaks they wear or the barbarian splendours of the sixteenth century Kremlin. Yet the styles of acting are deliberately varied; and it is surprising how successfully Eisenstein integrated the grand stylisation of the royal characters with the traditional realism of the humbler ones—Malyuta and the Oprichniki.

Cherkassov, as one gathers from his autobiography, did not greatly relish his work on the film; and one can hardly wonder. Eisenstein uses the actor's magnificent apparatus with the least possible use of the actor himself. He bends his body to become part of the plastic design; he uses his voice as part of the musical score; creates out of the actor's body, without the actor's participation almost, the ideal synthesised performance. Not that this method of working with actors appears to have been invariable with Eisenstein: he won a comparable and equally stylised performance from Serafima Birman, as Euphrosinia, with, apparently, a much more conscious collaboration from the actress.

For years before *Ivan*, Eisenstein had been fascinated with the problem of colour. Here, in the last three reels, he was at last able to put his theories into practice and to complete his "ensemble". Colour processes at that period were unreliable (beside contemporary Soviet colour films, this one is of splendid quality), and time has not improved the tones. Even so, one can see Eisenstein beginning to develop the various lines of his studies—the realistic, descriptive use of colour (the oranges and pinks and blues recall sixteenth century ikons); the symbolic values of colour; and most important, the place of colour in the dramatic ensemble.

It is sufficient here to instance one way in which Eisenstein extends his old theories of montage to the use of colour. Ivan, having dressed Vladimir in the regalia, insists that he leads the Oprichniki to Mass. Jostled to the door, the simpleton stumbles drunkenly, to the accompaniment of a sinisterly comic little theme in the score. He reaches the door; his face in close-up is lit with the gaudy golden light of the feast; then, suddenly, the light changes to blue. The scene cuts to the interior of the cathedral, also blue-lit, where the assassin is waiting. Back to Vladimir, again lit in naturalistic golden light. The use of the blue which lights both the cathedral and, momentarily, Vladimir's face shows that this is not simply a cut to indicate parallel action. It indicates that at that moment the victim has recalled what is waiting for him in the cathedral. Eisenstein's experiments were still elementary; they remain far in advance of any work done with colour since his death.

The Boyars' Plot is unique and strange. But it is a thrilling film, showing Eisenstein at the height of his powers, a film artist in unequalled control of his medium.

DAVID ROBINSON

LE DEJEUNER SUR L'HERBE

IT IS A RENOIR FILM, that's the great thing. Renoir in 1960: the warm, tubby little man loves life, loves the South, trees, women, tumbling infants, and is more than a shade distressed by the world as it goes and the refrigeration creeping in. He has harked back a hundred years to that liberating moment of Manet's painting that yields his title; and there in the clearing under the trees, how prim look the artists, how the naked shock of the outdoors has lost its pulse in the century's perspective! He must, rather ruefully, smile; a comedy of primness in the woods is set going.

Art, easy living, have taken strides since then. But now the threats of the new respectability make him look forward. Not a hundred years: one can't, daren't, look so far. Say, fifteen or twenty. Will science already have given child-making its blessing? Will the girls dream of A.I.D.? Will misery have taken over, with a thousand inflictions from slimming to antisepsis, from everyone's case-history to lunch talks on the planned existence? And (as a huge afterthought) won't Europe have to unite, or there will be none of the ripe natural world or the chill artificial one? Here likes and dislikes—Renoir's, and ours too—grow muddled; everything *isn't* so simply black and white; dwelling in the past, dreading the future, one must pick among the possible paths to come. So, if the natural life is to survive, there must probably be a President of Europe? And he will of course come out of the ranks of infallible science? Him, on the eve of his election campaign, adored teacher and clinical Messiah, Renoir makes the hero of his warning fable or satire-idyll.

It starts, oddly for a Renoir film, with a jumble of TV appearances and interviews of the President-to-be and his blonde giraffe of a bride in the Commandant's uniform of some new girl-guide movement: oddly, but then lately Renoir has been dabbling enthusiastically in TV, and the whole film, despite its craning forward and back, is very much linked with his present activities. Satire takes us by the scruff before even the titles go up; and then with a change from monochrome to colour, comes the indulgence of trees, trees that seem so much more at peace than we, trees beautifully old against the sky, trees serene and here and there tormented—a lyric introduced with rubberneck rapture and returned to again and again.

One thinks of that poem of the rainswept river with which *Partie de Campagne* ended; there the Coda held eternity; here after a while, though always enchanting, the moment and the occasion don't always retain their hold, we need closer attachment... Yes, of course we agree to fall in love with the plump farmer and his black-browed daughter, the shamelessly idle vintner, the woods and the bathing pool and Auguste Renoir's house brought back to life from its museum status, with the tinted leaf-shadows dripping down white-cast walls... How could anyone not luxuriate? But doesn't it slide us out of poetry into self-indulgence? Doesn't it weaken the caper of this Picnic which brings a laboratory brood in cars to stage an engagement party and to meet old Harry in the shape of a Pedlar with a brown goat who has only to play the flute, like Pan, to send a hurricane blowing through trees and skirts? The stately new Déjeuner sur l'Herbe is broken up, whipped away, insufflated with weird longings for Orgy. It's very funny at times, but like the poetry, it keeps going, a wild party that mustn't flag, with Renoir himself furiously blowing from a shrubbery. Because, after all, the final vindication of his argument, if you can call it that, is how far the film itself embodies, and not merely displays, passionate enjoyment. It's a mixture of rich and thin, instinct and synthesis, the quick touch held some instants too long: a little mind-routine has crept in from the other side.

It's a Renoir film as, say, at one time *You Never Can Tell*, that seaside spree of a dentist, was a Shaw play; this is an anti-Shaw bundling together, sketchy in argument, sumptuously set in Nature, with instants of pure lyrical comedy. Colour ranks high in its pleasure, the best colour he has given us. His actors, whether naturals or test-tubers, truly embody their roles, and Catherine

"Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe": Catherine Rouvel.

Rouvel as the young black-browed beauty, who may redeem us from Scientification with her bare back in the stream, is old Auguste's joy given animation—and, may I add, more fashionable measurements? The camerawork of Georges Leclerc attains often to the sensuousness of brush-strokes; and an indispensably happy little tune is provided by Joseph Kosma. All in all, it is Renoir.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

THE ANGRY SILENCE

THE ANGRY SILENCE (British Lion) belongs to the post-*Room at the Top* mood of the British cinema. Its subject means something in contemporary terms; its working class dialogue sounds tolerably close to the way people talk; it is not afraid, on some levels at least, to call things by their right names; and there is an air of drive and energy about it enough to recharge the flat batteries of half-a-dozen studio vehicles. It is also, and encouragingly, the work of a new production unit, a company formed by Richard Attenborough, who plays the lead, and Bryan Forbes, who scripted the film. The cost, one understands, was relatively modest: this is not the sort of picture actors appear in to work out their contracts, but the rarer sort which reflects a good deal of honest determination.

This, in fact, is a film with teeth to it. What exactly is it getting them into? Its story concerns a factory worker, Tom Curtis, who refuses to join in an unofficial strike at his works, who is later sent to Coventry, subjected to the "angry silence", and is in the end brutally beaten up, losing an eye in the process, by the hooligan element in the factory. It is left to his easy-going, girl-chasing friend Joe (Michael Craig) to see that a kind of justice is done. Joe pursues the leading Teddy boy on his motor bike, backs him into a corner, knocks him senseless, and lugs him back to a works meeting, to confront the men with the reality of their own guilt. Echoes, perhaps, of *On the Waterfront*.

Tom Curtis's battle to preserve his individuality, the right to dissent, only makes dramatic sense if his opponents have some arguments on their side. But *The Angry Silence*, if it has not loaded its dice deliberately, has certainly done so in effect. The factory management shows flagrant, cynical contempt both for the workers' demands and for Curtis's stand; the men themselves behave with the well-drilled docility of a chorus line. No one questions, no one noticeably negotiates. In the background, however, is a cryptic figure, a Communist agitator directly recognisable by any audience with a minimum of political awareness but never openly named. The simple British workman is easily gulled by this sly *agent provocateur*, whose very unworkmanlike descent on the factory goes entirely unquestioned, whose orders come on the telephone from London, and who is played by Alfred Burke with the air of soured malevolence characteristic of the demon king or the failed intellectual. If the film wants to say that labour troubles are often Communist-inspired, it should be unequivocal about it: titillation is scarcely more admirable politically than sexually.

If the strike-maker lurks in the background, the four Teddy boys are brought into the foreground. They carry with them the weight of unthinking violence, they slouch and sneer, and they emerge at the end to deal Tom Curtis the final blow. Like the Communist, they are assumed to need no explanation: they are simply there. And, like the Communist, they conveniently give the film villains who are outside, as it were, the general pattern of the factory and therefore of society. Tom is only partly the victim of the men he works with. The real trouble comes from an agitator and a gang of corner boys; and, as in *On the Waterfront*, the end is public expiation and a good beating up.

The brutal disciplining of the union man who wants to follow his own way is essentially a war of attrition. Here it is presented brusquely, almost abruptly, in a few short scenes: Tom in the factory, sizing up the situation; Tom at home discussing it with his wife (Pier Angeli); and later Tom in the canteen, breaking into hysterical defiance. Along the way, we are not even spared the scene in which his six-year-old son has to call daddy a "dirty scab". In these episodes, which rely on immediate emotionalism rather than the sense of cumulative strain, the film's method is summed up. One sometimes suspects that British directors are trained on the theory that the only crime is slowness: a whole group of film-makers now work as though a film represented some kind of contest with the audience. The director here, Guy Green, is not alone in his liking for the shock or effect cut—someone mentions a cup of tea, and we immediately cut to one; two children stand together, and the image shifts to a photograph of the children being thumb-tacked to a notice-board. This makes for a restless, raucous style of direction in which reactions are demanded instantly, the only one never allowed for being reflection.

"The Angry Silence": the Teddy boy brought to judgment.

The factory in *The Angry Silence* looks like a place in which something might really get made. The actors, with Richard Attenborough hanging on with terrier tenacity to the leading role, Bernard Lee heading the works committee and Brian Bedford bossing the Teddy boys, play their parts as though they meant them. And independence and a look of tough-mindedness are not such common qualities in our cinema that we can afford to denigrate them. Being tough-minded, though, means being ready to meet a subject squarely and honestly. I would have found *The Angry Silence* a good deal more sympathetic if it had named its Communist, or done without him; if it had given its strikers at least a case to argue; if it had taken time to explore what the angry silence might mean in more than sensation terms; and if it had found its resolution (even if it meant Curtis's retreat) within its situation rather than in the double act of violence. Half the battle may seem to have been won when care is taken to ensure that a film of this sort looks right; but it is not the half that matters.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

LES QUATRE CENTS COUPS

THAT THERE'S A Chaplinesque pathos about François Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (Curzon) isn't surprising; for like Chaplin's tramp, Antoine Doinel, the protagonist of this film, tries to live a way of life that quickly brings him into conflict with society. Antoine presents positives similar to Chaplin: he's a bit of a dandy, full of tricks and affection, with a lovely appreciation of life, and yet a sense of its absurdity also. But for him, the conflict with society is more than a matter of pathos; for Antoine is only twelve-and-a-half years old, and his history presents in an extreme form that most tragic experience of adolescence, the loss of spontaneity. In a series of incidents of ever-increasing significance, Antoine is shown as the victim of such irresponsible people as his parents, the masters at his school, and various social workers who have to deal with him. The more he tries to evade their tyranny, the stronger is their hold over him. The prison of his home and of his school leads to a cage at the police station, and eventually to the barred windows of an Institute for Juvenile Delinquents.

This is a deeply ironical film. For instance, Antoine's downfall is precipitated by his admiration for Balzac, one of the most eminent

critics of society, and confirmed when he tries to return a stolen typewriter; and this irony takes on an increasing resonance because Antoine doesn't realise the ambiguity of social morality. At one moment, a morality picked up from films lets him down in life; at another, his parents punish him viciously for what is really a trivial offence, though they in turn are amused by the way in which a friend has fiddled his tax returns. The irony that envelops the film is truly Balzacian, involving a whole society; so that Antoine's schoolmasters and parents, especially his mother who could easily have been portrayed as a villain, are seen as victims of misunderstandings and misfortunes similar to his. And it is for this reason that Paris, which plays such a great part in this film from the credit titles onwards, is more than a stage setting. This grey Paris of dawn lights or drenched with rain (so beautifully photographed by Henri Decae) is essential to the action; and it is significant that the most moving moment in the film comes when Antoine is driven away from it in a police van. This city, which has condemned and almost destroyed him, is the place he most loves.

Truffaut has said of his film that it should be judged not by its technical perfections but by its sincerity; but of course a man's sincerity can only be judged by his technique. It is in fact through the success of his technique that Truffaut catches so much of life's richness. How can one define it? Best, I think, by comparing it with the technique used by Alain Resnais in *Hiroshima mon Amour;* for Resnais, in his brilliant film, uses an approach which is the most complete antithesis of Truffaut's, and in doing so brings up the most serious issue in film aesthetics. With Resnais one is always aware of art. Experiences, through subtle montage, are always wrought into aesthetic patterns so that (especially in his treatment of the bombing of Hiroshima as an allegory) one admires his wit but suspects his morality. With Truffaut, however, art conceals art; sequences are neither broken down and manipulated into aesthetic effect, nor is their moral complexity tampered with. The control of the film lies rather in the playing of complete sequences one against the other, like tesserae in a mosaic. For instance, before the tense scene in which Antoine is caught returning the typewriter, we are shown actuality shots of children absorbed in a Punch and Judy show, their faces gleaming with excitement. The point is clear—Antoine is a child like them—yet it doesn't hinder our involvement in the action. Here, as in life, we only realise the complexity of an event after we have lived through it. It follows then with complete rightness that the closing shot of this film should be ambiguous.

The camerawork shows this admirable tact also. The camera trails after Antoine as he empties his garbage can, for instance, or drinks a bottle of milk, never forcing us into an immediate judgment. The most audacious of these shots is one that already has become classical, a one-and-a-half minute travelling shot at the close of the film as Antoine runs away from the Institute across the countryside and down to the sea. It is clear that Truffaut has learnt much from the theories of André Bazin, to whose memory the film is dedicated.

Bazin's belief that the film should try to capture the ambiguity and multiple levels of meaning one finds in the best novels is amply carried out here; but always in terms of the immediate, of the subtle, significant detail. With the most delicate of touches Truffaut builds up a picture of Antoine's home, of its disorder and his neglect; or, more amusingly, the bizarre home of René, Antoine's friend, with its stuffed horse and its multitude of fat, purring cats. Relationships are caught in a simple, startling action; Antoine's affection for his mother is shown briefly in the fond way he handles the perfume and brushes on her dressing-table. But Truffaut's most impressive accomplishment is to catch the improvised quality of life; and this, one suspects, is why he is so much at home with children. The scenes in the classroom are both tender and funny; without knowing it, one boy systematically messes up an entire exercise book, whilst another one only finds inspiration for his essay as the master tells the boys to stop writing. And it is because of this talent for improvisation that Truffaut manages to bring out such a magnificent performance from his Antoine (Jean-Pierre Léaud), of whom Truffaut has said: "I encouraged him to play by ear. He performed freely, reacting in his own manner and responding in his own words." The success of this method is most apparent in the weakest part of the excellent script (by Truffaut and Marcel Moussy), when Antoine is questioned by the analyst at the Institute. In fact the boy's naturalness and charm, and Truffaut's lightness of direction, make this scene wholly successful; and it is finally, indeed, through Truffaut's lightness of touch and zest for life, and through Léaud's realisation of Antoine's stoicism and almost cockney resilience, that this film never becomes portentous or depressing. It is, truly, a film that speaks up for life.

ERIC RHODE

FIN DE FIESTA

UNTIL THE CURZON ENTERPRISINGLY gave *The Fall* a trial in its February programme, it seemed unlikely that any of Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's films would breach the barricades of commercial distribution. *The House of the Angel* remained the only fiction entry from the 1957 London Film Festival not to achieve wider showing, and the following year *The Kidnapper* ran into surprisingly heavy fire from at least one critic. Suddenly, however, the young Argentine director (he is 35) appears to have arrived. A season of Nilsson films is planned this summer at the National Film Theatre, and the critics have been afforded a preview of his latest picture *Fin de Fiesta.*

These four films explore regions of the same imaginative country, though from different points of view. All are concerned with childhood and adolescence, a preoccupation which Nilsson feels he has now worked out; two have a predominantly feminine viewpoint, two a masculine. The dissimilarities lie also in technique and level of ambition. Thus *House of the Angel* and *The Fall* are oppressively interior, sensitive to nuance, acute in their observation of the absurdities and suppressed tragedy of bourgeois family life; they also overdo the mystery, employing an oblique narrative method and a precious camera style which fail to hide faulty male characterisation and a lack of resolution at the end. My preference for the other two films is probably a personal, masculine one. Admittedly they are less satisfyingly original, but they are more forceful, direct and deeply felt—*The Kidnapper*, in which he steers a vagrant, happy little band of slum children through summer-bright images of theft, rape and death to make a scarred and savagely ironic comment on poverty; and *Fin de Fiesta*, the study of a boy's adolescence spent in the shadow of political tyranny.

The story, compellingly told, is conventional enough. Mariano Braceras, a veteran political boss, has moved from the gaucho class to a position of wealth and power maintained by terror and rigged elections. We witness his decline through the eyes of his grandson, Adolfo, a sullen, highly sexed, directionless boy whose home-bred hatred for Braceras is complicated by his growing affection for the old man's worldly henchman, Guastavino. As Adolfo accompanies Guastavino on various night missions, seeing for himself the tortures and shootings, his hatred—though still largely passive—takes firmer root, being finally resolved when Braceras has Guastavino murdered for suspected defection. He denounces his grandfather at a family wedding reception; the old man has a heart attack; Adolfo expectantly watches him crumble and die, then determines to live down the family's shame in politics.

Based on actual events in the Argentine in the Thirties, this is clearly material for a disturbing film; and there are two ways of tackling it. One is to concentrate everything into a single issue, like the outcome of Skeffington's campaign in *The Last Hurrah.* The other is to try to cram all the characters, complexities, time lapses and involved narrative of a book like *All the King's Men* into a hundred minutes. Judging by Beatriz Guido's adaptation from her own novel, and Nilsson's collaboration on it, one would say that he has plumped for the latter approach without yet having the grasp to pull it off. The rhythm is jerky, the construction bookish and the characterisation uneven. With Adolfo, Nilsson is on familiar territory—the adolescent in danger of corruption, from the cruel despotism of his grandfather on the one hand, and the brothel and gaming-house morality of Guastavino on the other. This is a favourite theme, and its reappearance here is not necessarily a fault; in fact Leonardo Favio, an actor of remarkable intuitive gifts, perfectly expresses Adolfo's brooding sensuality and constraint, and his scenes with Guastavino—the bullet-riddled car rides, the visit to the French prostitute, the walk along the river bank—have the terseness of the best kind of photo-journalism. But unfortunately, just as Elsa Daniel overshadowed the men in two of the previous films, so Adolfo seems to throw other important characters off-balance: the heroine, with whom Adolfo carries on a desultory love-hate relationship, is hardly more than a lay-figure, Braceras remains a shadowy "heavy," and Guastavino is finally sentimentalised into a good chap at heart, shot down outside a crowded children's playground. The ending, too, with the lovers walking off hopefully into the mist, is an undisguised visual cliché. Nilsson has properly eschewed *The Kidnapper's* bitter tail-kick, but without that film's concentration he seems lost for a convincingly positive conclusion.

And yet, hampered as he is by the novel form, Nilsson is a born film-maker with a striking personality. His few characteristic comic scenes—the fancy-dress rehearsal, the visits of the snobbish aunts, the girls' bathing party—have a genuine family-album quality, as rich in atmosphere and suggestion as the all-pervading violence,

" Fin de Fiesta ".

which progresses from erotically flailed belts and rape in the hen-house to the monstrously theatrical moment when Adolfo sucks a bullet from Guastavino's chest: one of those vaguely unreal effects Nilsson likes to try for their symbolic associations. The whole is sensuously underlined by Ricardo Younis's unexpectedly sober photography, and an equally improved use of sound and music.

In short, the film is as uneven and at times as ingenuous as the rest of Nilsson's work. But the anger comes through, and the sense of purpose, and technical evidence of a steadily growing talent. Though *House of the Angel* and *The Fall* are more likely to gain Nilsson a fashionable reputation abroad, films like *The Kidnapper* and *Fin de Fiesta* can also do only good at home.

PETER JOHN DYER

CONSPIRACY OF HEARTS and SINK THE BISMARCK!

THE PLACE, A CONVENT in Italy: a group of nuns engaged in smuggling Jewish orphans out of a local transit camp find a Rabbi to conduct a Yom Kippur service for the children, while they hold their own service in the chapel. Suddenly the Germans break their way in. This sequence of cross-cutting from *Conspiracy of Hearts* (Rank) has been hailed as a great moment in cinema history by one reviewer and as a tribute to religious solidarity by others. In this World Refugee Year it would be good to be able to praise a British film with something to say about intolerance and genocide, especially in current context to swastika-daubing and the like. But *Conspiracy of Hearts* mainly uses a sizeable display of good intentions to cloak the maximum number of stereotypes that can be extracted from a story told in terms of poor orphans and lovely, self-sacrificing nuns.

Most of the contrivances can be traced to Robert Presnell Junior's script, although Ralph Thomas's direction continually seizes the many opportunities for melodrama offered him. Accordingly, this particular group of nuns emerge as rather neurotic and implausibly feckless in their smuggling techniques, suffering heroically through a make-believe world reminiscent of those Hollywood resistance dramas of the Forties. The playing, too, is conceived in terms of devoted piety, with a few comic asides as proof of the nuns' normality. Lilli Palmer's Mother Superior makes a glamorous spokesman for spiritual non-violence; Yvonne Mitchell plays the frustrated, non-cooperative nun whose heart melts at the sight of a suffering child; and Sylvia Syms as the novice is all tearful simplicity and love. This simplification extends to all the characters; the Germans are two-dimensional brutes and the children carefully unkempt and pathetic. And yet, despite the predictably worked out violence, the soupy music and sentimentality, something might still have been achieved if the film's makers had brought a clearly formulated attitude to their material. As it is, they have reduced an inspiring real-life drama to the level of a paper-back thriller; and it is hardly surprising that its long roster of distinguished names fail to live their parts in recognisably human terms.

The second British war film with which 1960 has opened, Lewis Gilbert's *Sink the Bismarck!* (Fox), has a more familiar setting and remains loyal to our war cinema's traditions and conventions. Here, a firm distinction is made between the sober, stiff and unyielding British naval officers and the fanatical, broken-accented Germans. Its American writer has also freshened up C. S. Forester's original documentary account by superimposing a fictional English equivalent of the tough, inflexible commander figure taken more of less direct from American stereotypes. Kenneth More's failure to make anything tangible out of this character is scarcely his fault, and the awful inevitability of his reactions to stress and personal sorrow stems as much from the direction as the playing. Judged as a naval thriller, the film is not very exciting: elaborate model work traces the course of the battle, yet the effect is often spoiled by excessive

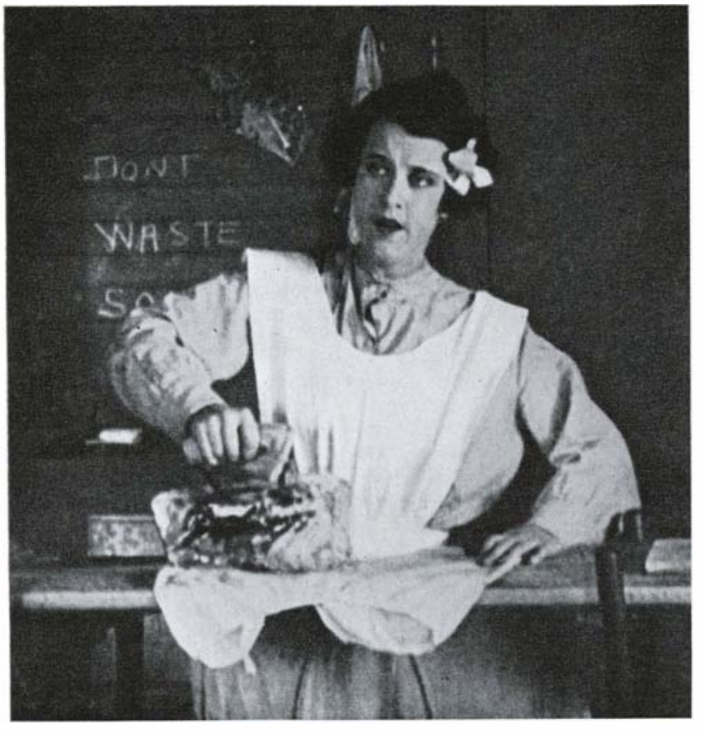
repetition of shots of the same toy boat. When the camera does get close in, we are shown extensive scenes of carnage on the stricken *Bismarck*, presented with a none too likeable relish. At the end, Kenneth More, now his old friendly self, invites his adoring and exquisitely genteel Wren officer to dinner; and this tribute to the officers and men of the two navies who fought a desperate battle ends with a third-rate Service joke. "Four stripes on his arm and he don't even know what time it is," says one rating to another.

By a strange coincidence, the showing of these two films in London came at the same time as a revival of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and the first commercial screening of *Nuit et Brouillard*. The contemporary relevance of these two films is quite astonishing, for each makes an individual comment on the personal anguish caused by two World Wars. The British films have a much smaller ambition, of course. Yet judged purely as commercial variations on a popular theme, they are startlingly lacking in awareness or conviction or passion, call it what you like. In recent years, our cinema has resolutely turned war into a profitable box-office investment aimed at a mass audience now conditioned to expect a few mild thrills, a dose of lower deck humour and a lulling ooze of noble platitudes. Some fifteen years after the end of the war, in the challenging light of the Sixties, *Conspiracy of Hearts* and *Sink the Bismarck!* can only appear dated and detached—for they are simply not part of our time.

JOHN GILLETT

EXIT SMILING

THIRTY ODD YEARS OF obscurity in the M-G-M archives, a title suggesting nothing more substantial than a seaside variety show, and a record of total neglect by all the film historians: that seems to be the background of *Exit Smiling*, brought belatedly to light in the National Film Theatre's recent "Hundred Clowns" season. A silent Beatrice Lillie comedy sounds, in any case, self-contradictory. How could anyone stop her talking? In fact, apparently, they couldn't. Briskly, almost audibly, she seems to be keeping up her own running commentary throughout the progress of the film, which casts her as a maid of all work, all dangling apron strings and ineffectual tussles with the ironing-board, who accompanies a touring repertory company on its travels and occasionally gets the chance to wear a rather trimmer apron on its stage. Her ambition is to play Little Dolores Du Barry, the Mary Pickfordish heroine of the company's current hit, who gets herself up as a vamp (or, as the titles correctly insist, vampire) to save her lover from a moustachioed villain. Forlornly attached to a young man under a cloud, whom she coaches as the new juvenile lead, the maid finally achieves the vampire outfit, embarks on a seduction which begins modestly with a simulated faint and ends less formally with a flying rugger tackle over a sofa, and duly saves her 'hero'—for his prettily simpering fiancée.



Maid of all work. Beatrice Lillie as the resilient heroine of "Exit Smiling".

To anyone who has come upon Miss Lillie only at a fairly late stage in her career, the enchantments of this comedy are those of recognition. In 1926 she was doing precisely what she does now: discovering that the trailing ostrich feathers, so casually manipulated by other hands, become in her own an entirely unmanageable weapon; tossing a fur elegantly round her shoulders, only to find it mysteriously attaching itself like a train to her skirt; getting a stranglehold on herself with her own pearl necklace; experimenting with a hat which somehow can never quite be persuaded to match her face; and keeping all the time that air of baffled, sceptical or delighted acceptance which has always been her reaction to the unpredictable. Nothing disturbs Miss Lillie: it is only the commonplace which sometimes leaves her a little bored. A perfect miniaturist, she is the centre of her own comedy and her material is consequently entirely dateless.

Simple, unassuming and easily charming, the film has other attractions in Jack Pickford's genuinely innocent hero, in Franklin Pangborn's extremely ladylike repertory leading man, and in the antiquated train which is the company's base. Beatrice Lillie also contrives somehow to transform this mobile household into a kind of servants' hall, to create about herself the correct atmosphere for her definitive study of the English tweeny at her most put upon and indomitable. Even at this late date, one feels grateful to Sam Taylor, the director and scenario writer, and Marc Connelly, who shared the screen credit, for achieving what the British cinema neglected. Years later, Miss Lillie subdued herself to the requirements of a more conventional part in Clive Brook's *On Approval*. Here the part is the player; and if only for its unique quality as a record, the National Film Archive should make every effort to ensure that this exuberant performance does not again disappear into oblivion.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

In Brief

EYES WITHOUT A FACE (*Miracle*). It is by no means easy to get at the meaning behind Franju's second feature film. The British press as a whole rejected it out of hand, finding it no more than nauseating; and it is certainly a peculiar hotchpotch. The exposition, plunging us into the story of an eminent surgeon (Pierre Brasseur) who makes away with young girls in order to graft their living tissue on to the hideously disfigured face of his beloved daughter, is a straightforward *diabolique* excursion into Boileau-Narcejac territory and Gothic intimations—an unsmiling doctor in a desolate mansion, whimpering wolf-hounds in the cellar, a resolute, leather-coated woman driver with a motionless passenger, a lot of gloomy weather. Though the atmosphere verges on self-parody, it nevertheless compels us to share in the game of hide and seek around a face mask hiding something we fear, but still desire to see.

The sequences of the girl wandering through the house, listening without answering to her lover's voice on the telephone, her eyes alone preserving what remains of her natural beauty, come nearest to Franju's own description of the picture as a "poetic fantasy". What follows, however, is some most unaesthetic moments of sheer physical horror, meant to carry a kind of intellectually charged shock, in the visual record of a skin-grafting operation. The tension slackens as the plot switches to some awkwardly devised police detection, picking up slightly with the surgeon—torn between professional honour and love of his daughter—realising that either way he is powerless. The situation is now ripe for a violent climax, but in fact ends on a near-comic note of symbolism, with the poor demented creature, doves perched upon her outstretched arm, wandering off into the night. It remains to be said that, whether serious or grotesque, the film's Grand Guignol elements are consistently well-served by Shuftan's camerawork, Maurice Jarre's music and the acting of Brasseur.

Where, then, lies the key to it all? In the hands of a Clouzot the story would have been done straight, for what it was. Here we seem to have a moralising Clouzot, punctuating his Gothic display with serious symbols one minute, deliberately mocking it the next. Did

Franju himself really know what he was up to? Is the film another result of his "tension between a violent nature and an ethical mind" (the contrast between clinical 'witchcraft' and love and natural beauty) or is it just a horror film by a man whose personal favourites include *The Fly*? One thing is certain. Something has been lost here between Franju's search for a "tender lyrical quality" and his realisation. And, even more significantly, someone seems to have lost himself: a film-maker who, a few years ago, could communicate much clearer and more defined ideas with a rare clarity and hard-hitting power.—ROBERT VAS

SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL (*United Artists*). This is rather a sad film—not for its story, but for the symptoms it displays of a general sickness in films at the moment. Among the claims that appear in the Press hand-out, for instance, are proud announcements that "The most extensive and unusual scenes were those shot . . . in the vast sugar-cane fields of Queensland . . ." and, a little further on, that "Ernest Borgnine and John Mills were taught cane-cutting technique by expert cane-cutters."

But these "extensive scenes" exist either in the publicists' imagination or among the sweepings of some Australian cutting-room floor. They certainly do not appear in the film except as a few generalised shots behind the credit titles—while neither Mr. Borgnine nor Mr. Mills is ever seen anywhere near a cane field. In a timid concession to what is regarded in the industry as "production value" the producers have tried to make believe that they are presenting a large-scale prestige production, full of unusual locations, exotic scenery and "famous landmarks". But the public will not be taken in.

The result is all the sadder because Ray Lawler's play, with its virility, nostalgia, and warm sentiment, could have been made into a successful small film instead of a would-be large one. As it is, the irony of the original remains intact. The one-time boss of a cane-cutting gang, Roo, having to give way to the younger man, and refusing to accept the fact that he is old, is a touching character; his friend, and mirror image, the great lover who is shown up as no more than a little man frightened of marriage, is still very funny. But the poignancy of the theme needs finely balanced acting, and a powerful hand shaping the whole story, for it not to become sluggish. In this version, under Leslie Norman's inattentive direction, the first third is near disaster—slow, incoherent, dead. Later, as the springy writing and Anne Baxter's brave acting begin to take over, the film warms up and something of the play's original intention is realised; but the burden of the playing rests on the two men, and here the film never measures up to its possibilities. John Mills, as the comic lover, has taken great pains with his performance, but it remains a performance. Ernest Borgnine, as Roo, finds it hard to identify himself with the character—everything, from his accent to his grasp of a scene, seems as uncertain and wavering as the general tone of the adaptation.—KENNETH CAVANDER

ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING (*Columbia*) gives Stanley Donen a moderately successful stage play—a free-wheeling romp about a symphony conductor whose low fidelity drives his wife back to harp lessons, while his explosive temperament, unmitigated by her diplomatic charms, causes him to use up orchestras "like other people use Kleenex"—and an intriguing combination of talents in Kay Kendall and Yul Brynner. With a script adapted by Harry Kurnitz from his own play, Donen seemed to have the ingredients for a light-hearted kidding of the concert masters, spiced with the dialogue inherent in a situation in which the "wife" seeks a divorce (preceded by a three-day marriage) as the only respectable termination to eight years of living in sin. If the ingredients are there, Donen, somehow, never really develops the possibilities. Much of the force in the satirical thrusts at orchestra trustees is lost in the transference of the story to English settings (the orchestra that "came with the canning business" is surely an American concept); and Donen is content to allow a series of sight gags based on wildly improbable décor (how funny is a bed shaped like a gondola?) to alternate with staged exchanges between Kendall, Brynner and an overworked Gregory Ratoff as the harried manager. The result is mild entertainment, moving easily to a very neat finale lifted bodily, and wisely, from the play.

This is Kay Kendall's last film, and when she is given an opportunity (guarding her honour with duelling pistols, or annotating a televised interview with liberal assistance from a hip flask), she demonstrates conclusively that we have lost a very fine comedy actress. Coolly gracious in dresses by Givenchy, the tremulous cupid's bow poised to smile or sneer, she attacks these minor lunacies with great verve, charm and flawless timing; and with only a hint of the strain under which she must have been working. To the trumpet solo in *Genevieve* and the "Help, help, au secours" in *Les Girls* one may now add the harp solo in *Once More, with Feeling*; and, sadly, close the collection.—SAM KULA

Surveying the crater: James Mason and Arlene Dahl in "Journey to the Centre of the Earth".

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH, as directed by Henry Levin for Fox, illustrates the virtue of coming to terms with good old-fashioned hokum. Nothing, not even a blockbuster budget of 4½ million dollars nor the services of a scientific technical adviser, has been allowed to impair the marvellous implausibility of Jules Verne's story. One brisk morning in 1880, Professor Lindenbrook of Edinburgh University observes the sun rise over an extinct volcano in Iceland, adjusts his rucksack and deerstalker, and calmly leads his intrepid expedition of two men, a newly bereaved widow and a duck down a volcanic chimney to the centre of the earth. Wrangling from time to time over the right route, noises in the night and the imprudence of the widow's decision to come along wearing stays, the otherwise tolerant and true little group clamber perilously along narrow ledges; stop for tea at a wayside amphitheatre; bathe in a glittering quartz grotto; stagger and strip through hot deserts of salt and luminous algae; dance, relax, cook, and cobble the soles of their boots in the shade of a mushroom orchard; survive an attack by giant reptiles, and shipwreck after being swallowed by the whirlpool of a subterranean sea; stumble upon Atlantis; and are finally belched by jet-propelled elevator through a volcanic vent and the cone of Stromboli into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

The décor is fun, occasionally reminiscent of a Turkish bath in some Baden-Baden hotel, and always properly in accord with nineteenth century "return to paradise" romanticism. The Wellesian appearance of Thayer David's unmitigated scoundrel, Count Saknussemm, and Bernard Herrmann's score both have exactly the right hint of brooding megalomania. But the main credit for dressing, rather than overdressing, Verne goes to producer-writer Charles Brackett. His script reveals a precise feeling for the balance between narrative excitement and parody, for the incongruity of staid Victorian manners in settings of outsize fantasy. As producer, his most notable achievement lies in the welding together of an unpromisingly disparate cast into an immensely game and likeable team. Pat Boone's solemnly plucky young student and Arlene Dahl's elegant, indefatigable Swede, perched twirling on her luggage as she descends into the abyss at the end of a rope, are two particularly unexpected pleasures. But James Mason's indomitably prissy Lindenbrook and Peter Ronson's duck-loving Icelander are no less enjoyable company, and their journey—though perhaps a shade slow to get started—makes for a piece of fresh and hospitable absurdity.—PETER JOHN DYER

A SEAT AT THE CIRCUS

PHILIP OAKES

"Loved Ben. Hated Hur."—MORT SAHL
"It is the best chariot race in the world."—DILYS POWELL

EIGHTY YEARS AGO, MAJOR GENERAL Lew Wallace, former Civil War commander, ex-Governor of New Mexico and one-time U.S. Minister to Turkey, retired from active service to his home in Crawfordsville, Indiana. To occupy his time he decided to write a book. It was written in longhand in purple ink and it was called *Ben-Hur—a tale of the Christ.* Optimistically, General Wallace told his wife that the book would possibly earn them as much as £35 a year in royalties.

In nineteen years *Ben-Hur* sold 400,000 copies, and it has never since been out of print. By 1920 a stage version had been running for 21 years. In 1907 Hollywood filmed it as a single-reeler and in 1926 M-G-M turned it into the first of the religious epics, costing £1,400,000 and starring Ramon Novarro as Ben-Hur and Francis X. Bushman as Messala. In ten years the film made over three million pounds and the book had become the biggest best-seller—excluding the Bible—in American publishing history.

The new *Ben-Hur* maintains the record. The statistics (cost, £3 million: preparation, 5 years: shooting, 6½ months: editing, 9 months) have the familiar elephantine authority. But they impress hardly at all. De Mille has prodigally been and gone. The epic is now commonplace. Stars have cantered through screen conversion, like footballers through a plunge bath. Currently Lollobrigida—complete with ruby-studded navel—queens it over Charing Cross Road in *Solomon and Sheba.* CinemaScope, Cinerama and Todd-AO have stretched world screens for a good many years. Bigness, except in competition with TV, has lost whatever virtue it may once have had. But *Ben-Hur* rolls on as irresistibly as its chariots. It is scheduled to run for at least a year in London. The majority of the critics praised it; the public love it. Paperback sales, with Charlton Heston scowling on the cover, are steady, and the *Evening News* boosted its circulation by serialising the story of the film. General Wallace's gold-mine is still showing a dividend.

2

The merits of the film are obvious: it is spectacular, grandly directed by William Wyler, often witty, and—in a totally unexpected way—sophisticated. The script, credited to Karl Tunberg and doctored by S. N. Behrman, Gore Vidal and Christopher Fry, is wholly literate. And the performances of Charlton Heston, Jack Hawkins and Stephen Boyd are virile and arresting. The appeal, however, goes further back: a best-seller for eighty years must have qualities independent of the drum-beatings of M-G-M.

The story—groaning with sub-plots and period detail—is itself simple enough. Ben-Hur, a Jewish prince, becomes the enemy of his childhood friend Messala, commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem, when he demands that the Maccabee informs against other Jewish patriots. Condemned to the galleys, Ben-Hur saves the life of a Roman admiral, and later takes his revenge on Messala by beating him in the chariot race. His mother and sister—imprisoned by Messala—are cured of leprosy by Christ on the way to Calvary. And Ben-Hur (whose fortune has financed a private army to defeat the Roman legions) turns philanthropist, dedicated to promoting Christianity.

The style and the dialogue are declamatory. This, for instance, is Ben-Hur's mother, Miriam (and also, one feels, Wallace himself), on Rome:

> "In nothing but war has Rome a claim to originality. Her games and spectacles are Greek inventions, dashed with blood to gratify the ferocity of her rabble; her religion, if such it

Above: Ben-Hur (Charlton Heston) is given a cup of water by Christ while on his way to the galleys. Left: Ben-Hur's horses—symbolically white in contrast to the defeated Messala's black—take the lead in the chariot race.

may be called, is made up of contributions from the faiths of all other peoples. . .. To the excellences of other peoples the egotism of a Roman is impenetrable as his breastplate."

Through 630 pages, heroes posture and villains snarl:

"Men of the Tiber," Messala continued, "who is he most favoured of the Gods? A Roman. Who is the lawgiver of the nations? A Roman. Who is he, by sword-right, the universal master?" "A Roman, a Roman," they all shouted.

Love, both sacred and profane, is kept under wraps:

Ben-Hur took her hand. "Do you care so much for me?" "Yes," she answered simply. The hand was warm, and in his palm it felt lost. He felt it tremble . . .

Violence and horror get their full measure, too, with such details as this description of leprosy:

Her hair was snow-white and unmanageably coarse, falling over her back and shoulders like so much silver wire. The eyelids, the lips, the nostrils, the flesh of the cheeks, were either gone or reduced to fetid rawness . . .

The film borrows its style from the book. Its brutality (apart from Messala's death, which occurs later and off-stage in Wallace's story) duplicates the original, virtually sentence for sentence. The pace of both film and book is a deliberate jog-trot, the sturdy, mile-eating stride of the marathon runner, with pauses for breath in both print and celluloid when turgid, expository passages are sandwiched between vivid scenes of action. Characterisation is sharp, but shallow; backgrounds are as thickly varnished as a Landseer, but men and women in the foreground (except for Ben-Hur himself) are little more than vocal blobs of poster paint. The chariot race remains a set-piece.

In effect, Wallace's book is an attack on Rome, the militarist state, manned by armies in the pay of a dictator. Ben-Hur signifies armed resistance; Christianity, the ultimate weapon. To Wallace, the crime of Rome (the law-giving, culture-bearing Empire, knee-deep in blood) was that it became decadent. What had once been a liberating force was now, in its last days, repressive. The stern but fundamentally humane Papa had become a monster. It no longer governed; it oppressed. And so, to the former administrator, it was bad.

On every level, *Ben-Hur* is a story of conflict, good against evil, dramatised Lyceum-style and with an epic simplicity. But the hero of the novel is not the conventional Victorian (cum-Jewish) stuffed shirt, abounding in the novels of Wallace's contemporaries. His virtues are not negative. Away to a good start, he is rich, handsome *and* aristocratic. He dresses well and admires women; he is a brave hunter and is prepared to gamble, not only with money but with his life. Above all he is resourceful; he is wily; he has learned how to survive. The perils of the plot are all designed to measure his strength. Exile, slavery, the chariot race and the attempted seduction by Messala's mistress (this is left out of the film): these are the classic tests of endurance. Odysseus went through much the same obstacle course before retirement in Ithaca.

There are other elements, all of them deeply traditional. The transformation scene when Ben-Hur is brought to Rome, a galley slave turned hero, has echoes of the Frog Prince—magicked back to his old form by an act of unselfishness. Ben-Hur's intricate plan of revenge generates the same thrills (culminating in the chariot race) as did the race-track novels of Nat Gould.

Wallace did not borrow (in any case Nat Gould came three or four decades later), but he absorbed—as any writer absorbs—large draughts of the ethos which goes to form pop culture. Instinctively he knew what his readers wanted. But, unlike the stale products of the writing machines in *Brave New World*, Wallace's book reflected not only the demand but also his own practical philosophy, hammered out in war, administration and diplomacy. And behind every sentence loomed the burgeoning Christian myth.

In an essay on Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell remarked on the popularity of what he described as "good bad poems". They were popular, he said, despite their vulgarity and lack of aestheticism, because they evoked a genuine sentiment which the reader recognised at the time, or remembered when an incident producing that emotion occurred. The sentiment frequently expanded into sentimentality but it still rang true. The theology of *Ben-Hur* falls into the same category. Pop religion has always been a big seller—especially in the twentieth century—down from Leslie Weatherhead's sermons to the fictional pieties of Lloyd C. Douglas. For the price of a cinema seat you can purchase a small dose of painless faith, or (if your beliefs transcend the bromides) a small share of the myth that even agnostics, such as myself, acknowledge has changed men's lives.

Ben-Hur is precisely what it says—a "tale of the Christ". It is a romance, a success story and an adventure yarn: all things to all readers. The theological salt can be savoured, according to taste.

3

I once asked Cecil B. de Mille which writers were responsible for the script of *The Ten Commandments*. He shook his head, freckled like an over-exposed melon, and wagged a prophetic finger. "No writers," he barked, "it's all in the Bible." Although equally coy with screen credits, the producer Sam Zimbalist (who died during the filming of *Ben-Hur*) had considerable respect for the literary hand. Which lines belong to which writer is anyone's guess, but the idiom never approaches Hollywood-archaic. The rhetoric carries and the jokes are good. "Would you believe it," exclaims Hugh Griffith, as a race-mad sheikh, "that man thinks he can treat my horses like animals." Pontius Pilate (played by Frank Thring) is portrayed as a career diplomat, chagrined when he is posted to Jerusalem. "And I asked for Alexandria," he complains.

Apart from the removal of a subplot and the tidying up of some loose ends, Wallace's original is barely altered; the film improves on the book by judicious pruning and polishing, not by wholesale revision. In this respect *Ben-Hur* differs from almost every other religious epic. De Mille re-wrote the Bible wherever and whenever it suited him, and the research that went into finding out the exact details of the costumes worn by ancient Egyptian dancing girls passed lightly over the script. His sadism—especially in *Samson and Delilah*—was entirely for kicks. And his showmanship, so long the pride of the industry, is best recalled, at least by me, in the orgy scene in *The Ten Commandments* where the Golden Calf is briskly groomed by a worshipper's pony-tail.

Catering for all tastes? Or could it be that fetishism helps to sell pictures too?

Ben-Hur sets an entirely new standard for spectaculars. It has none of the crudity of *Solomon and Sheba*. It does not despise its audience like the hip-flicking *Salome* (along with Bathsheba, the favourite Biblical stripper). It has vigour, a sure narrative touch and an opulence that not only stuns but also intermittently pricks the imagination. No one has ever done this sort of thing so thoroughly before. In its way it is as much a landmark as the Festival Hall—a superbly theatrical shell, already a period piece.

The parallel is not exact. *Ben-Hur* employs no new techniques and its quality is entirely conventional. Although its good taste alone sets it in splendid isolation from its bloated competitors, it is fashioned from the same materials. And, like the ingredients of General Wallace's best-seller, they are second-hand. Best-sellers are bought, but rarely criticised. The chief criterion by which they are judged is the degree of success by which they manipulate a known formula. In the main (and there are always exceptions to the rule) they are engineered rather than created. *Ben-Hur* is the ideal stop-gap solution to the film industry's recurring crisis: it dazzles the front office, it brings in the cash customers, it has the massive, upholstered familiarity of the lending library jumbo. Like the circuses that kept the Roman groundlings happy, it encourages no serious criticism. All that it demands is applause.

Becker

Below: Jacques Becker at work with his actors on a scene from "Rendez-vous de Juillet".

JACQUES BECKER, WHO DIED in Paris on February 20 at the age of 53, will be mainly remembered in this country as one of the most accomplished of the generation of French film directors which came to the fore just after the Liberation. With his more recent pictures he had not on the whole been lucky. *Touchez pas au grisbi*, an adept thriller of the Paris underworld, won Gabin an acting prize at Venice in 1954, but one could detect little real concern for the characters beneath a busy, clever surface. *Ali Baba* was a vehicle for Fernandel: *Montparnasse 19*, with Gérard Philipe as Modigliani, was intended as a deeply felt love story within a period setting, but somehow failed to recapture the meaning and intensity of *Casque d'Or*; and Becker himself expressed dissatisfaction with *Arsène Lupin*, which he described as a "frothy entertainment" instead of the keen character study he had intended. His last film, *Le Trou*, the story of a prison break using mainly non-professional actors, may have given him the opportunity he was waiting for.

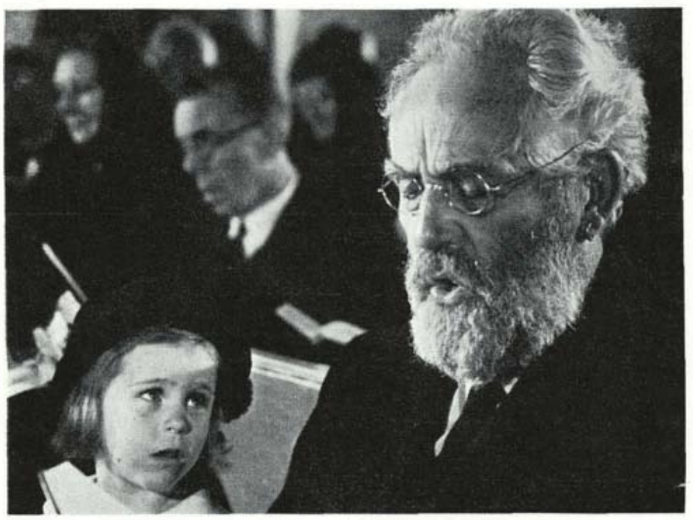
Though his later work continued to reveal a polished and inquisitive talent, Becker's reputation will undoubtedly rest on *Casque d'Or*, *Goupi Mains Rouges* and the comedies. *Antoine et Antoinette*, in particular, communicated a rare spontaneity in its description of everyday life, and Becker's personal Credo ran through every foot of it. "I believe in the possibility of entertaining friendship and in the difficulty of maintaining love. I believe in the value of effort. And I believe above all in Paris. In my work I do not want to prove anything except that life is stronger than everything else."

He liked to call himself an entomologist. But the abounding fascination he had for people was demonstrably more sympathetic, at any rate in his early films, than the term implies. If he pinned his characters down, then it was never in clinical isolation, but against their jobs, families, backgrounds—all marvellously fused into a concentrated dramatic current of doing and being.

Obviously as self-critical as he was of the post-war Clair ("If silence is golden, why did he prefer silver, or even lead?"), Becker's masters were Chaplin and Stroheim, his mentor Renoir. He admired ideas, humour, versatility and invention. Certainly the hard peasant power of *Goupi* and the searching, highly charged impetus of *Casque d'Or* were ample demonstrations of his ability to go beyond the merely fanciful, patchwork texture of stylistic exercises like *Dernier Atout* and *Falbalas*. But they remained films without issue. Similarly his liking and facility for the thin story that is as good as one makes it led to a growing detachment in his comedies. Increasingly, one was reminded of the uncle in *Edouard et Caroline*—a likeable, meticulous man, suffering the agonies peculiar to a discomfited host of whom too much has been asked, not least by himself, but who goes on trying just the same. P.J.D.

"If he pinned his characters down, it was never in clinical isolation . . ." A group from "Casque d'Or", Becker's account of the Paris of 1900.

Sjöström



Below: Victor Sjöström as the patriarchal farmer in Gustav Molander's "Ordet" (1943).

CERTAIN DIRECTORS, THROUGH no fault of their own, are constantly associated with some period of development in their own countries at the expense of their individual artistic achievements. Such a figure was Victor Sjöström (who died at the age of 80 in January), co-founder of the Swedish cinema with Mauritz Stiller and famous for over fifty years as actor and director. Film fashions change rapidly, however, and historians are now beginning to discover that the more obviously exciting technical innovators are not necessarily those with the longest staying power. Like Mahler, Sjöström may well have said "My time is yet to come". Thanks to the world's archives, a young generation is now slowly discovering what this generous and indomitable artist really achieved. Being a Swede, it was inevitable that he began by taking his camera out of doors; aided by the marvellous Swedish light, his earliest silent films revealed him as a sturdy countryman with the sensitivity of a poet. Deeply immersed in religion, nature and the eccentricities of the country folk he loved, he enshrined all these qualities in such films as *Terje Vigen*, *The Outlaw and his Wife* and *Jerusalem.* Sometimes, as in the last half of *The Phantom Carriage*, he found himself in turgid waters; but this is a seemingly unavoidable hazard for all Nordic artists. Yet good humour and a kind of earthy tenderness were also present; added to which the naturalistic acting of a film like *Karin Ingmarsdotter* seemed far in advance of its time compared to the murky, theatrical expressionism of the contemporary European cinema.

In the middle Twenties, when many leading European talents were looking towards Hollywood, Sjöström came too, bringing with him actors and ideas, and somehow survived. Most of his American films are now lost or forgotten, yet what remains shows us that Sjöström's vision of man pitted against the changing face of nature and his own passions gained, if anything, an extra dimension. The visual refinement was there from the beginning; but he now had the inestimable advantage of Lillian Gish. Like Garbo, the actress found him an ideal collaborator, and responded with two subtle, deeply felt performances in *The Wind* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

In common with others of his generation, Sjöström felt unable to continue direction in the last years of his life, and made only two sound films; one in Sweden, the other (*Under the Red Robe*) in England. Instead, he devoted much time to acting in others' films and plays. These performances brought him close to an audience that had never seen his own work: the strong, searching, craggy face and the beautiful voice vitalised several indifferent productions. His last screen role in *Wild Strawberries* was entirely worthy. Here, both voice and personality found full expression in a work which clearly meant much to him. Like Professor Borg, Sjöström was also

"A sturdy countryman with the sensitivity of a poet." A characteristic landscape from "The Tower of Lies", made by Sjöström for M-G-M in 1925.

nearing the end of his long journey. In this film of memory, it will not be easy to forget the stooping figure murmuring "smultronstället" in the sunlight and, at the end, smiling contentedly and waiting for sleep to come after that last wonderful, luminous vision of times past . . .

J.G.

On the 20th of February, Ingmar Bergman delivered an address at the Swedish Film Academy. The following tribute to Victor Sjöström is a slightly abridged translation of that address.

NO. I CAN'T COMPOSE a speech in memory of Victor Sjöström. I suspect he would smile with the utmost irony if he could see me making such a speech.

Instead, I shall simply pass on a few brief impressions—jottings set down in my notebook while we were actually filming *Wild Strawberries*. They are very personal lines my pencil has drawn. But for me they are like engravings, and very much alive.

What I and the rest of us in the team who were filming at that time witnessed was the struggle of a tremendous will against the forces of annihilation. From moment to moment this struggle raged on, with victories and defeats equal on either side.

But when the film was finished and the artist no longer had a strict working routine, like a bulwark, to protect him, the enemy took a merciless revenge and plunged him into nameless suffering. His soul tried in vain to ward off the threat of refrigeration, extinction. The prison walls of his chosen isolation became thicker and thicker all around him . . . It was a cruelly tortured prisoner who was finally given his freedom.

I read a few lines from my diary:

"I can't rid myself of the notion that this old man is a child who has aged in some extraordinary way, having at birth been deprived of both parents and brothers or sisters; a child who is endlessly searching for a security that is just as endlessly denied him.

"It's for this reason he almost brutally rejects all affection that isn't sincere. He loathes it when people stretch out their soft, sticky fingers to catch him, and he spits on all half-hearted or self-seeking sympathy. Even so . . .

"In his mind's despairing duality he does not succeed in hiding or keeping secret his pain. In front of everyone who stands near him he shows his always infected, always open bleeding sore.

"The death of his wife . . .

"Ceaselessly he repeats his accusations against an unjust god who obliterated the only comforting reality he had and who cast him out into the waste land.

"His glance is for ever trying to pierce through the darkness. He is for ever trying to catch the sound of a reply to his terrified questions and despairing prayers. But the silence is complete."

Another page from my diary:

"I never stop pryingly, shamelessly studying this powerful face. Sometimes it is like a dumb cry of pain, sometimes it is distorted by mistrustful cruelty and senile querulousness, sometimes it dissolves into self-pity and astoundingly sentimental effusions.

"But there are also other moments which I shall never forget.

"Suddenly he can turn toward us with a smile, a gesture of spontaneous tenderness, his tone of voice expressing a subtle wisdom. At such times it becomes no effort at all for us to love him and we can meet him simply and in the sunniest concord."

A third jotting from my diary:

"We have shot our final supplementary scenes of *Wild Strawberries* —the final close-ups of Isak Borg as he is brought to clarity and reconciliation. His face shone with secretive light, as if reflected from another reality. His features became suddenly mild, almost effete. His look was open, smiling, tender.

"It was like a miracle.

"Then complete stillness—peace and clarity of soul. Never before or since have I experienced a face so noble and liberated.

"Yet it was all nothing more than a piece of acting in a dirty studio. And acting it had to be. This exceedingly shy human being would never have shown us lookers-on this deeply buried treasure of sensitive purity, if it had not been in a piece of acting; in simulation . . .

"In the presence of this face I recalled the final words of Strindberg's last drama *The Great Highway:* the prayer to a god somewhere in the darkness.

> 'Bless me, Thy humanity
> That suffers, suffers from Thy gift of life!
> Me first, who most have suffered—
> Suffered most the pain of not being what I most would be.' "

INGMAR BERGMAN

by PENELOPE HOUSTON
and ALAN BRIEN

WE DISSENT

THIRD PROGRAMME (or third channel) television may not be very far over the horizon, and last January a single programme on the commercial channel simultaneously gave it both a boost and a setback. The programme: *We Dissent*, produced by Kenneth Tynan for ATV, delivered over to twenty-five more or less articulate spokesmen for American nonconformism, and screened for whatever percentage of commercial TV's public might be presumed to be watching at a defiantly non-peak hour. By twenty-past ten, when the programme began, the evening audience is already thinning out; by ten to twelve, when it ended, the greater part of the nation is in bed. Any programme beginning at half-past ten or so on a weekday evening can be assumed to meet one of two requirements: to keep the screen painlessly filled for the tireless viewer, or to be material so distinctly labelled "minority TV" that it finds itself automatically relegated to late evening. *We Dissent* came into the second category. But it need not have done so, and the fact that a programme so enormously well worth doing should seem in the end so unsatisfactory has implications which go rather beyond the single occasion.

We Dissent set out to show that America is not all two-tone convertibles, juke boxes, Daughters of the American Revolution, ex-admirers of Senator McCarthy, Men in Grey Flannel Suits and office girls enjoying the best of everything. No one, of course, ever thought it was. But you have to start somewhere, and the programme clearly had at the back of its mind a sort of brand-image of America against which the attitudes of its dissenters could be measured.

From the twenty-five speakers we heard some good talk, some platform pontificating, some beating of the air. From Alexander King, that TV itself is a "gargantuan swindle"; from Norman Mailer, that a hipster is "a man who has divorced himself from history"; from Mort Sahl, about the beat generation, that "their tempo is right for themselves"; from a beat poet, charmingly, that "everyone was having visions at that time." Alger Hiss, speaking slowly and with every comma audible, called Oliver Wendell Holmes "a man who thought, beautifully, for himself." A newspaper editor said that the affluent society represented "a vast accumulation of junk"; and Professor Galbraith, author of *The Affluent*

Society, suggested that to increase the public sector of the (American) economy would in fact be a service to capitalism. A trade unionist praised the British union system; a clergyman who refused to pay his taxes explained why; and Dalton Trumbo, immensely articulate, spoke up proudly for the thinking man in Hollywood, for victims, like himself, of the blacklist mentality of the 'fifties.

Much of this was unorthodox, some of it was vigorously expressed; and Hiss and Trumbo were contributors who might not have been given such a courteous welcome on the networks of their own country. But a curious consequence of the programme's method of presentation was that one had no very great sense of live controversy. Hedda Hopper and Agnes de Mille, meeting at long range and across a gulf of opinions in a recent *Small World*, came neatly to grips with each other, cogently to demonstrate a range of American attitudes. *We Dissent* brought its speakers face to face only with the microphone and the camera, gave them each three minutes or so in which to make a statement, and left whatever they had said dangling in the air. In the studio, William Clark introduced the speakers with that air of antiseptic tolerance which is so often the mark of the TV journalist. The opinion is, as it were, disinfected, wrapped neatly in polythene, before it reaches us.

Some of the programme's limitations were obvious. The beat poets, whether luxuriating in visions or attempting to define the "smell of poetry", produced an impression of extremism which knows itself to be tolerated. They have become, in a sense, the playthings of an over-prosperous society. And the programme made them bear the brunt of what might be called literary dissent. Couldn't some of the older generation of writers—Lionel Trilling, Mary McCarthy, Arthur Miller—have been persuaded to say something? Is there not dissent from the right wing as well as from the left, and might not that, too, have been informative? But, whatever the content, it would still be easy to point to omissions. The significant thing, in this context, is not who appeared and who did not, but what total effect was created.

Here technical quality becomes relevant. In *We Dissent*, virtually no attempt was made (except briefly in the case of the beat poets) to situate an interview, to use descriptive film material. The interviewer himself had been dropped out of the programme and the speakers were left on their own, to make what impression they could. Film presentation, with the quality varying from serviceable to barely passable, gave them little help. The result was a familiar paradox: the programme had the fascination inevitable when ninety minutes of the most powerful medium of communication are handed over to an idea. But the combination of contributions of varying intrinsic value (pomposity, heaviness, repetition were not wholly avoided), of uninventive presentation and of a strictly neutral tone of introduction, meant that the spectator had to find in himself some of the excitement that was missing from the screen.

* * *

The programme's viewing figures are revealing enough to deserve quotation. The TAM rating was 17 per cent. of the total potential audience, indicating that 1,531,000 sets were switched on. Audiences were highest in the Midlands and in Ulster (over 20 per cent.) and unexpectedly low in London (13 per cent.). This is a breakdown on the entire programme. From a minute by minute survey, we find that the London audience began at 40 per cent. (521,000 sets), dwindled by about half during the programme's first thirty minutes, and by 11.15 was down to 5 per cent. By the end, only 25,000 sets in London were still switched on. From half a million to 25,000 seems a pretty staggering switch-off, and in fairness it should be mentioned that this was not nation-wide. In the Midlands and the North, the decline was in the region of from 50 per cent. to 9 per cent. on the TAM scale.

The timing, of course, has a good deal to do with it. It takes a world championship fight or a general election to persuade large sections of the public to delay their bed-time. Any suggestion that programmes of this calibre could be put on at peak-hours, however, is usually met by the commercial companies with the simple argument that their appeal is only to the minority. And in the case of *We Dissent*, as presented, the argument would probably be justified: it was a programme which demanded a certain amount of staying-power from the audience. But one doesn't know just how Kenneth Tynan and his director, Michael Redington, were briefed. They might have preferred to use film material, to introduce controversy within the programme itself, to avoid the repetition of several contributions which sounded like pocket platform dissertations. They may have found the treatment they gave the subject satisfyingly austere; or they may themselves have been conscious of a trickling away of vitality.

It seems defeatist, however, for companies to assume from the outset the existence of a minority audience and, perhaps unconsciously, to gear their approach accordingly. The thing then becomes a vicious circle: put the programme on late and without visual excitement and relatively few people will watch; put it on to gain prestige rather than a public; then use the excuse of a minority audience as a reason for treating the next similar programme in the same way. The BBC, which has moved forward such relatively specialised features as *Monitor* and *Face to Face* to the middle of the evening, and which gives both highly skilled technical presentation, is more adventurous in this elementary but significant matter of timing.

It is mildly instructive to speculate how companies who make more regular use of documentary than ATV might have handled this subject. Associated-Rediffusion, one suspects, would have chopped it into a dozen sections, handed it over to Daniel Farson, and produced a little more conscious emphasis on crankiness. Granada would have used news film, given it all an American accent, and kept the loud pedal firmly down in the old March of Time style. The BBC might have put the *Panorama* team to work; or it might conceivably have come up with what I believe to be the answer: a feature with more sense of focus and direction, a programme which realised that non-stop talk cannot really be exciting television unless the talk seems to be moving forward, and that to achieve this demands greater sense of involvement on the part of the commentator. *We Dissent* moved in a circle. The straight line is the commentator's job, and it is in the calibre of its interviewers and journalists that the BBC still out-distances its rivals.

All television programmes of this kind seem to aspire more or less to the condition of journalism. They hardly attempt to go beyond it. At its best TV journalism can be sensationally firm and direct; at its worst it becomes a stereotyped pattern of casually assembled scraps of film, eye-on-the-clock interviewing, artificially high-powered techniques whose main purpose seems to be to keep the blood somehow pumping through the programme. Film, if it is to be well used, takes time, money and talent. People can be manipulated more easily: bustled in and out of the studio, goaded into taking up artificially controversial positions, sat down at tables and invited to pontificate. The risk is always that the whole process will become stereotyped. Even a programme such as Ed Murrow's *Small World*, for all its range and intelligence, is handicapped by Murrow's own too obvious delight in the sallies of his guests. The ring-master, one feels, has put the troupe through its paces for another week.

A programme such as *Face to Face*, with its atmosphere of unhurried inquiry, its courteous concern to explore character as well as surface, avoids most of these hazards. But *Face to Face* is as professional as anything on television, while the more ambitious *We Dissent* left the impression of honesty without flair. If there is a lesson to be learnt from the viewing figures of *We Dissent*, with that abrupt loss of audience in the programme's first half-hour, it is not that ninety minutes of unorthodox opinions cannot hold a public, but that vitality

of presentation should mean even more here than it does in the obviously popular programme. To mistake efficiency for vulgarisation is the commonest weakness of those who hold that "culture" is a minority question. But the minority, in this case, means any of us who are prepared to give television the attention we give a newspaper article.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

FOUR PLAYS

I DO NOT BELIEVE IT is possible to discuss any form of drama without considering the actual conditions involved both in presenting it and in watching it. Ideally, I suppose, television playwrights should be able to attempt almost anything that can be staged in a theatre or filmed in a studio. But in fact they don't. They appear to be most successful with the anecdote.

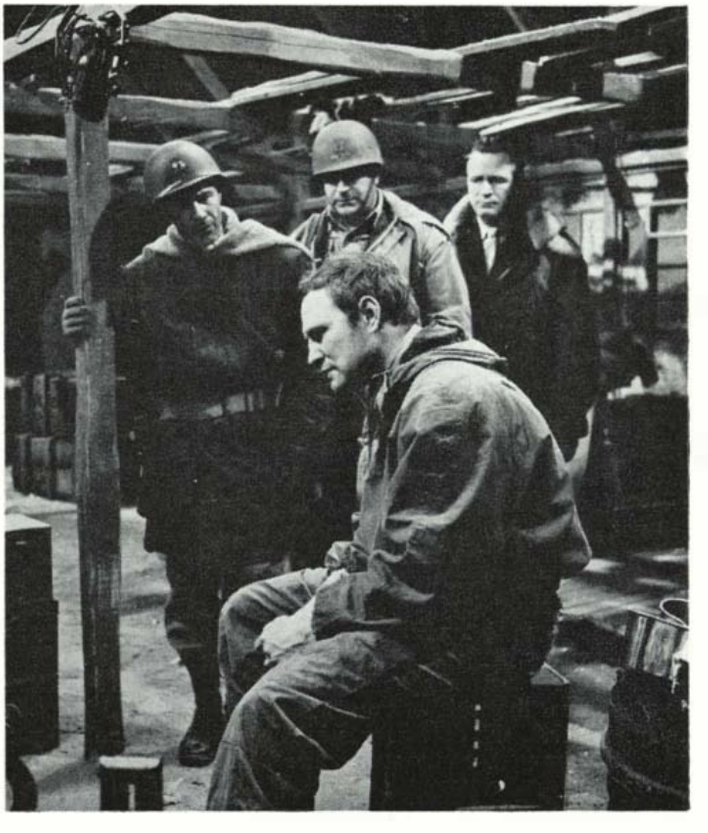
I think that on the whole this is a sensible and realistic reaction to their audience. It is useless to pretend that a television play will be received in the way a stage play or film is received. The television viewers are as easily arrested, and as easily bored, as the drifting crowds along a seaside promenade. They must be buttonholed immediately with a provocative question and then led on to pursue the answer through a series of simple but convincing syllogisms. They are waiting with a sort of suspicious willingness to be sold anything. They are as ready to pay out their attention for a cheap load of fairground swag as for a genuine bargain by Cellini. But unlike the people in the theatre or the cinema, they retain the freedom of the holiday loafer who is under no obligation to buy.

Their attention can never be counted upon for the run of the play. As Peter Black, easily the most professional and least gullible of the daily paper critics, pointed out the other day, no dramatic critic is ever interrupted during the performance by a man asking him where he should put the paraffin. This cannot be dismissed as an unfortunate, embarrassing accident which can occur among the best organised viewers. It is part of the nature of the medium. Television watchers are in a continual state of incipient distraction. Even the commercials are often a relief from the tension of procrastination and allow us a kind of papal dispensation to answer the needs of the fire, the telephone, the bladder, the contrast knob, the door bell.

Is it cultural defeatism to recognise that the television playwright must normally adapt his technique to accommodate such a gathering of restless groundlings? America, as ever, provides us with a macrocosm which rehearses on a giant scale the problems of our tiny microcosm. Films like *Marty* and *Patterns of Power* and *Twelve Angry Men* began on television as commercial propositions, not as unorthodox experiments. Most of the memorable British television plays manage to conform happily to these conditions just as the ballad-singers conformed to theirs. The superior standard production begins with one convincing and rivetting situation that gathers the passers-by at the intersection of several avenues—and then explores them one by one, leaving plenty of stones unturned. It is static but active like a ball of bees. The language is vigorous, yet diffuse and repetitive. It circles round the point far longer than would be bearable in a stage play, but it contains sufficient subtleties to keep the keen viewer awake yet not too many revelations to confuse the pre-occupied onlooker. Its images are occasionally striking and individual, with the camera pressing forward like an inquisitive bloodhound to nose out the lingering close-up; yet the pace remains leisurely. There is never a purely visual clue, a significant pattern in light and shade, which makes its own instantaneous, wordless point. After all, half the audience is listening rather than watching. The other half is watching like a hawk but misses any dialogue which is not rephrased and repeated a second later.

Any production which makes a personal impact while obeying these conventions is likely to be a cut above the average West End play or film. Such was *The Tip-Off*, Arnold Yarrow's prize-winner in the ATV play competition, produced by Desmond Davis. It had a situation which might have been taken out of the morning's newspapers: which one of the union executive leaked to the reporter about the strike plans? In fact, *The Tip-Off* was so up-to-date that it had a heavy right-wing bias. The hero, wrongly suspected though a pal of the capitalist press, thought that strikes rarely achieved anything. The villains, a couple of sniffy, shifty doctrinaires in Raymond Huntley and Newton Blick, were the "trouble-makers, extremists and political axe-grinders" who tried to frame him. The machinery of the plot was as creaky as any thriller serial. The superficials were more authentic than the basic dilemma, but at least this was a drama set in a world which could be scrutinised by the viewers with some degree of accuracy. There was an outstanding performance by Harold Goldblatt as the old union boss eroded by responsibility like a granite statue in heavy rain.

Come In, Razor Red (ABC) was a Korean play written by Rod Serling, one of the most admired of the young American TV dramatists. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a B-feature toughie with psychological trimmings which never even provided the sort of cheap, vivid action excitements of that genre. The camera hovered like a gossip columnist around the conscience-stricken Major (Richard Harris) who had sacrificed twenty men to save five hundred, hungrily licking up each self-pitying tear. *Razor Red* was in the sentimental buddy-boy idiom which may be convincing to ex-G.I.s but here raises only contemptuous horse-laughs. To anyone with any experience of war in the British armed forces, the Major seemed the sort of dangerously wet amateur who should have been arrested on the spot by his second-in-command. Richard Harris gave a phoney, hollow, self-conscious performance, full of heavy breathing in a light baritone, which provided no



Conscience-stricken C.O.: Richard Harris in "Come in, Razor Red".

kind of answer to the endlessly repeated question "Are you the C.O. or aren't you?" There was also an understanding padre and wise doc, not to mention a "poor crazy kid" who charged the enemy head on and was wiped out. The play made little attempt at any progression but luxuriated around one cardboard character. Despite the tiny puffs of smoke, the occasional muffled rifle shot, and the presence of a platoon of real American Marines (what on earth did they think of these playboy soldiers?), the director Alvin Rakoff never succeeded in making the war seem more threatening than the background fighting in a Three Stooges or Laurel and Hardy farce.

David and Broccoli (BBC) was the best play, within the limits of television, I have seen by John Mortimer. It had none of the pretentious, synthetic theatricality of *The Wrong Side of the Park*. It accepted the conventions of its medium but strained them to breaking point. Like *Dock Brief* and *What Shall We Tell Caroline?*, it is written in the style of a realistic caricaturist—it is full of jottings by Boz with sketches by Phiz. As with Dickens' minor characters, Mortimer's people are nearly always harmless monomaniacs who make an indelible impression by the exaggeration of one ruling passion. They are ideally suited to television. In this latest play, Broccoli, the hairy ape of a boxing pro at a seedy private school, overflows the mould and turns into a ridiculous but unforgettable grotesque. Like V. S. Pritchett, John Mortimer is fascinated by the gaudy inner life of the English lower-class Puritan who appears so dead and decaying on the surface—Broccoli's obsession with the date of the end of the world seemed just right. Esmond Knight played him with such a battered punch-ball face, such thick catarrhal respiration, such pathetic animal clumsiness, that he overshadowed the whole play. The lesser characters too were not so obviously nudged into picturesque eccentricity as usual—Peter Sallis's jovial, defeated papier-mâché papa, Toke Townley's kindly sensible boiler-man, George Benson's happy hypocrite of a headmaster, retained in both writing and acting just that extra depth of subtlety which saved them from revue-sketch parody.

The only one of the plays I saw which ignored all the rules was John Arden's *Soldier, Soldier* (BBC). A monstrous and unnerving cross-bred, fertilised by *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* on the body of *Live Like Pigs*, it was born and lived despite all my obstetrical warnings at the beginning of this article. John Arden mapped out his no-man's-land between the poetic allegorical fantasy and the lumpen-proletariat period documentary and held his ground regardless of the attacks of boredom. It was a street ballad in prose mixing nonsense with

"Soldier, Soldier": Andrew Keir, Margaretta D'Arcy and Frank Finlay.

legend in a way which pulls the carpet away from under the feet of the critic. Andrew Keir as the Ancient Pistol adrift in the Victorian slums was so beerily and brutally present in the flesh that I felt myself inching towards the door as if I had intruded upon an underworld pub feud. The deliberately dated working class family lived in a house of such squalor as is rarely seen outside a Band of Hope lantern-slide. Yet, incredible as were Frank Finlay's ageing moronic window cleaner and Maurice Denham's sly, cowardly, corner-end politician, they seemed to embody the troglodyte ethos of much modern mass emotion far more accurately than many a tape-recorded, kodak-caught piece of naturalism.

ALAN BRIEN

Book Reviews

FILM: AN ANTHOLOGY, edited by Daniel Talbot. (Simon and Schuster, New York. Price in U.K., £3 5s.).

THIS ANTHOLOGY WAS compiled with the best of intentions and the safest of policies: to be no total loss to any buyer or reader. Mr. Talbot introduces his selection from the now vast literature of film with a pleasant and modest voice: "It makes no claim whatsoever to being definitive, but it does include much that is important in aesthetic and historical writing on the film." Though each of us dreams of choosing and publishing his own film anthology, it is true that none could be satisfactory without some of Mr. Talbot's choices. We might grudge some of the space taken by his selections, but would we not all use Panofsky's "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures" and Agee's durable article on American comedians? And if one wanted his book to *sell*, he would use the same bits of Goldwyn and Hecht anecdotes to make you worry less about Eisenstein and Kracauer. Not even the student, however, could find such an all-purpose selection wholly useful.

Besides giving the book an agreeable air, the editor's disingenuousness leads him up some risky alleys of enthusiasm. When there are choices within the same subject he does not always take the tough one—it's usually the fruity one (Robert Payne's *The Great God Pan* speaks for Chaplin) that is extracted for us. I think he was also deluded by the smartly elegant, but I should have preferred fewer condescensions (such as Margaret Kennedy's and Allardyce Nicoll's) and more intimacies of film-making, though harder to find, and harder to write. I also wish he could have been more adventurous in exploring the great unmined ore (with plenty of slag, granted) of magazine and newspaper writing. The neglect seems stranger when you notice that a few of Mr. Talbot's liveliest pieces (Manny Farber's, for example) came from magazines. Would he have given us Grierson's acid periodical pieces if Forsyth Hardy had not previously gleaned them and spread them on easy display?

Mistakenly, the anthologist thought his work was done when he provided accurate copies of his choices for the type-setter. But the state of film literature is such that each editor must read his favourites critically, and even go to work on them. For lack of a little extra library work on the chosen items, even "public relations" can be injured: the proud terminal date of 1923 on the dust jacket could have reached back to 1920, the year Faure's essay was first published. Walter Pach, its translator, is also neglected. Translations of film titles back into their original language is a treacherous business. Chaplin is the least excusable victim of this carelessness: here he is accredited with a film called *Smart People* (a re-translation from German) and *An Idyll of the Fields* (from the French). And the conscientious reader will have to puzzle through many other titles left drifting: see especially Henry Miller's list of "remarkable films", a list filtered through a normally faulty film-going (in Paris) memory. He could have used tactful editorial assistance without diluting either his theme or the editor's admiration for him, and the anthology would have been that much more useful.

The English reader may note a bad side to the U.S. origin of the book—a self-consciousness about theory that leaves the section on "Theory and Technique" without a single American writer (if Arnheim will pardon me). But its good side is more important: the export of some opinions (Seldes', Warshow's, Kael's) unfamiliar abroad.

JAY LEYDA

ORIENT: A Survey of Films produced in countries of Arab and Asian Culture. Compiled by Winifred Holmes. (British Film Institute.)

THIS CATALOGUE OF some 300 feature and documentary films, compiled by Mrs. Winifred Holmes, published by the British Film Institute and planned as a contribution to a UNESCO project for improved East-West understanding, will certainly find users. Anyone planning an Asian festival; film society secretaries looking for new material; anyone in films or television who wants information on the East—these presumably are the readers for whom the catalogue is intended, and who will find it a serviceable piece of pioneering. The catalogue gives fairly thorough factual details on each film, including the source from which it can be obtained; a plot synopsis, sometimes of rather unnecessary length; and a very brief indication of quality. Here the reader will have to do most of his own work. Mrs. Holmes leans a bit heavily on 'charming' as a descriptive adjective and is understandably inclined to retreat into cautious generalisations or references to the film's "popularity in its country of origin".

But the limitations of this undeniably useful compilation are not all inevitable. The catalogue, for instance, omits Communist China for the valid reason that this is a UNESCO-backed document and that China is not a member of UNESCO. Nowhere is this plain fact stated, so that the reader must work out for himself the reason for the omission. The introduction refers to principles of selection, with the useful warning that the films listed had to be those which the member states themselves approved as representing their way of life. But this does not explain why the selection is in fact so haphazard. The enormously prolific Hong Kong industry is represented by only five features. Japanese features get 30-odd entries, with virtually nothing earlier than *Rashomon*; films from the U.S.S.R.'s Eastern studios, on the other hand, take us right back to *Storm Over Asia* in 1928. In the other arts, a comparable catalogue might be expected to seem something of a work of scholarship. Mrs. Holmes, who has done a reasonable job within obviously limited resources, is scarcely to be blamed for the fact that this survey is nothing of the kind: the responsibility, rather, rests with the general climate of film research.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

PERIODICALS

NEW, BRITISH AND YOUNG, *Definition* (published by ex-students of the London School of Film Technique) is a venture one would like to welcome whole-heartedly. Surprisingly, however, this quarterly seems above all to lack sureness of purpose. Judging by its editorial, the writers are after a fresher, more positive approach to film criticism. Stuart Hall's article on *Look Back in Anger* is one of the more successful contributions in this line; but Dai Vaughan's not unpersuasive re-evaluation of Flaherty too often mistakes glibness of thesis for clarity of thought. *Definition*, in fact, is rarely as explicit as its name, or as *Sequence*—itself nonconformist in its time—was from the outset. Still, the second number promised in April may reveal a crystallisation of attitude—as well, one hopes, as a more professional approach to technicalities of proof-reading.

Among other magazines received in the BFI Library over the last quarter, Australia's *Film Journal* has increased its items and varied its contents. For instance, the November 1959 number includes useful material on various Japanese films and on Bergman, and carries a long review of *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two*. Of the more established American periodicals, *Film Culture* maintains its reputation for solidarity. The 19th number includes a long, serious and rather complacently categorised article on John Huston by Eugene Archer, but sets a livelier tone when dealing with the young American independent film-makers. A more pugnacious tone characterises the Fall and Winter, 1959, issues of *Film Quarterly*; the review of *On the Beach* is an example of its politically conscious approach to the American cinema. But there is also a lot of sympathy and thoughtful analysis in the articles on the Flaherty Seminar, the later films of Ozu and the *nouvelle vague*. (The latter subject now seems to have replaced the obligatory Bergman article in all self-respecting magazines from Warsaw to Sydney.)

In October, 1959 *Cahiers du Cinéma* published its centenary number. Since then, one recalls some worthwhile articles on the work of Hitchcock and Trnka, the excessive transcendentalism of a discussion between Franju and Truffaut, and a lot of wordage devoted to *Cahiers*' personal favourites, ranging from *Hiroshima mon Amour* to *Solomon and Sheba*. Denmark is represented by *Kosmorama*, a calmly reliable magazine of small format but exceptional usefulness in its filmographies of such lesser-known directors as Peter Weiss, Finn Methling and Carlos Velo, and of the documentaries of Dreyer. Finally, we have to report the sad demise of *Indian Documentary*, the quarterly which helped to keep alive the Indian documentary movement. "Idealism and altruism and uncompromising integrity," runs the editorial valediction, "are difficult virtues to maintain, especially by some who are in minority and opposition to the government. We are not defeated. We are only withdrawing from the fray for a little respite. And we shall soon be back in a different garb."

JOHN GILLETT and ROBERT VAS

Correspondence

Spreading it Around

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—It has been complained that the National Film Theatre programmes are denied to the provinces and that only Londoners can share the many delights these offer.

As distributors of films which appear mounted in N.F.T. seasons, we are upset that these often highly unusual subjects should be seen by only a fraction of the cinema-going public interested in stimulating international film fare.

Later this year, in conjunction with the British Film Institute, we hope to present a fascinating season of Far-Eastern films with particular emphasis on the Chinese scene. We are anxious that these films receive the wide audience we feel sure they will deserve. May we appeal to the readers of SIGHT AND SOUND—in particular Art Cinema managers, Film Society officials and film makers—to agitate for the presentation of these films in their area at their nearest willing cinema. We intend to do all we can to interest provincial cinema circuits but our single voice may not be enough. We are grateful for the support the Institute has already promised in this venture but feel that the more "outside" pressure there is, the better.

The programme will be advertised through the regular mailings well in advance; that is the time for enthusiastic souls to commence operations on their local cinemas. Any signs of response should be transmitted in our direction.

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP JENKINSON.

Contemporary Films Ltd.,
14 Soho Square, W.1.

The Technique of Animation

SIR,—I see that Mr. John Halas and Dr. Roger Manvell have both risen to reply to my review of their book *The Technique of Film Animation*. The essence of my review was that the book tended to pull the wool over the readers' eyes.

Their reply was constructed in such a way that it could only be answered point for point and would prolong the discussion endlessly (which I am perfectly willing to do).

Halas and Manvell are quite right in stating that Animation *is* complicated—however it is complicated within a SIMPLE system. What a book on this subject should do is outline this SIMPLE system and leave the worker to add his own complications as he progresses. Complications should appear *in relation* to the simple system. If this isn't done the innocent reader is faced with a hopeless number of unrelated details each of which has to be approached arbitrarily. Glamorisation of details is by no means confined to animation but is the curse of all the arts. Goodness knows how many talented people in process of artistic development are held back by this approach.

My review was a straight reaction to a lengthy, muddy work.

Yours faithfully,

RICHARD WILLIAMS.

46 Flanders Road,
Chiswick,
W.4.

Horror Cartoons

SIR,—In your Winter 1958–59 issue, Derek Hill expressed concern at the growth of the violent and morbid elements of films in his article *The Face of Horror*. I should like to express concern at the violent and sadistic elements in another branch of film-making, namely, the *Tom and Jerry* cartoons.

Violence in animal cartoons is not new, but seldom have I heard any concern expressed. In the *Tom and Jerry* films the stress is nearly always on revenge, the little mouse revenging himself on the callous cat, often by enlisting the aid of a bulldog. In the course of the film, the cat (and often the dog as well) suffer considerably, by having their faces smashed against walls, by being electrocuted, by being bitten or beaten, and so on.

The latest example in this series that I have seen, *Cat Fishing*, lost no opportunity for portraying cruelty and violence. The cat's tail was stretched to an incredible length, the bulldog was pulled backwards through a river till his body passed between two rocks, leaving his head jammed. He was pulled a number of times, banging his head on the rocks each time, till eventually his head was squeezed through, with the result that his eyes were forced almost from their sockets. Had this last sequence been made into a still, it would have made a frightening comparison with some illustrations in horror comics, with their stress on gouging out the eyes, to which Frederic Wertham has drawn attention in the book to which Derek Hill referred in his article, *The Seduction of the Innocent*.

Of course, these films are presented as comedies, and most people find them so ludicrous that they are not impressed with the horror. However, in this latest example, the opportunities for cruelty were exploited so fully that a number of members of the audience around me seemed disturbed. Even if they were *not* disturbed by that particular film, I am disturbed by the series as a whole and I feel that society's conscience should be disturbed also.

Yours faithfully,

D. G. BOYLE.

13, Park Avenue,
Princes Avenue,
Hull.

Rex Ingram

SIR,—As I am at present collecting material for a life of the film director Rex Ingram, may I appeal through the generosity of your columns to any readers who might have information about him. I would appreciate the loan of any documents, letters or photos, which I would retain no longer than a month and return safely to their owners.

Ingram, whose real name was Reginald Ingram Montgomery Hitchcock, was born in Dublin in 1893 and died in Hollywood in 1950. His varied and interesting career covered residence in Kinnitty, Ireland; Yale; New York; Hollywood; Nice and Cairo.

Yours faithfully,

LIAM O'LAOGHAIRE.

9 Coningsby Road,
Harringay,
London, N.4.

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Stills :
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Unforgiven.*
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *The Bells are Ringing, Ben-Hur, Exit Smiling, The Tower of Lies.*
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Wild River, Journey to the Centre of the Earth.*
BRITISH LION for *The Angry Silence, My Teenage Daughter.*
CURZON FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Les Quatre Cents Coups.*
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Juvenile Passion.*
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *The Boyars' Plot.*
UNITALIA for *La Notte Brava, La Dolce Vita.*
UNIFRANCE for *Les Loups dans la Bergerie.*
SVENSK FILMINDUSTRI for *Jungfrukällan, Ordet.*
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INTERWEST FILM for *Die Halbstarken.*
FILMS MARCEAU for *Recours en Grâce.*
ISSKUSTVO KINO for *Foma Gordeyev, The House I Live In.*
MOSFILM for *Stories of Lenin.*
LENFILM for *The Colt, The Overcoat.*
GRUZIA FILM, TIFLIS for *Somebody Else's Children.*
DAIEI for *Kagi, Fires on the Plain.*
SHOCHIKU for *Black River.*
A.Y.J.M. FILMS for *Le Signe du Lion.*
PRODUCTIONS DE BEAUREGARD for *A Bout de Souffle.*
M. MARCEL HANOUN for *Une Simple Histoire.*
PRODUCCIONES ANGEL for *Fin de Fiesta.*
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for photographs of Jacques Becker and Mark Donskoi.
OXFORD MAIL for photograph of Orson Welles.
DAVID ROBINSON for photographs of Sergei Yutkevitch, Mme. Eisenstein.
BBC TELEVISION for *Soldier, Soldier.*
ABC TELEVISION for *Come in, Razor Red.*

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A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars

***ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT (*Eros*) Last reissued ten years ago, Lewis Milestone's 1930 study of a group of young German volunteers in the 1914–18 war still stands the test of time, and emerges for the most part as a bold and arresting pacifist statement. (Lew Ayres, Louis Wolheim.)

*ANGRY SILENCE, THE (*British Lion*) Richard Attenborough as star and co-producer of well-meaning but equivocal story about an unofficial strike. Intermittently virile dialogue by co-producer Bryan Forbes; self-conscious, finally overwrought direction by Guy Green. (Pier Angeli, Michael Craig, Bernard Lee.) *Reviewed.*

*BATTLE OF THE SEXES, THE (*British Lion*) Bryanston's first release turns Thurber's *The Catbird Seat* into a mild, Ealing-inherited burlesque about a fierce female efficiency expert unleashed on an old-established Scottish clothing firm. Peter Sellers' frustrated attempt to commit the perfect murder is well worth waiting for, though. (Constance Cummings, Robert Morley; director, Charles Crichton.)

*BEN-HUR (*M-G-M*) Out of 5 years' preparation, 6½ months' shooting at Cinecittà, 40,000 tons of sand and a sea of blood and Camera 65 celluloid director William Wyler has fished a memorable, 9-minute chariot race, some Victorian scripture-book frescoes and an unexpectedly forceful Messala from Stephen Boyd. (Charlton Heston, Jack Hawkins, Hugh Griffith, Haya Harareet. Technicolor, Panavision.) *Reviewed.*

BLUEBEARD'S TEN HONEYMOONS (*Warner-Pathé*) George Sanders' Landru disposes of a charming, rather nostalgic roster of victims (Jean Kent, Patricia Roc, Greta Gynt) in suitably drab settings. (Corinne Calvet; director, W. Lee Wilder.)

CARRY ON CONSTABLE (*Anglo Amalgamated*) Sidney James, Eric Barker, Joan Sims and the rest of the Carry On team coax some random humour out of male nudity, female impersonation, lingerie . . . the lot, in fact. (Director, Gerald Thomas.)

CONSPIRACY OF HEARTS (*Rank*) Uneasy attempt to pass off Lilli Palmer, Yvonne Mitchell and Sylvia Syms as nuns organising the escape of Jewish orphans from a Nazi transit camp; the script doesn't miss a trick. (Albert Lieven, Ronald Lewis; director, Ralph Thomas.) *Reviewed.*

DOG OF FLANDERS, A (*Fox*) Ouida's story of a Flemish boy (David Ladd) with a dog and an ambition to be a Rubens, handsomely mounted and fluently sentimental. (Donald Crisp, Theodore Bikel; director, James B. Clark. De Luxe Color, CinemaScope.)

**ENFANTS DU PARADIS, LES (*Individual*) Carné's celebrated super-production: a wartime (1943–5) retreat to the Paris of 1840, its pantomimes, romantic plays, thieves' kitchens and sideshows. Brilliantly acted, artificially written, a meandering cortège in memory of the grand romantic gesture. (Arletty, Jean-Louis Barrault, Pierre Brasseur, Marcel Herrand.)

FACES IN THE DARK (*Rank*) Minor Boileau and Narcejac suspense item about wife and partner of blind industrialist conspiring to murder him. Inviting situations; prosaic handling. (Mai Zetterling, Michael Denison, John Gregson; director, David Eady.)

FLESH AND THE FIENDS, THE (*Regal International*) Uninvitingly gruesome account of the Burke and Hare business, tricked out with love interest and a prostitute. Makes one pine for Karloff and Val Lewton, who did it all years ago with so much more nicety. (Peter Cushing, Donald Pleasence, George Rose; director, John Gilling. DylaScope.)

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES (*Films de France*) Robert Hossein's second feature, made in 1956: a spurious plea for adolescent gangsters, with gipsies thrown in for good measure. (Marina Vlady, Pierre Vaneck, Gianni Esposito.)

*GIGI (*M-G-M*) Colette's little fairy tale of the *demi-monde*, with Lerner-Loewe lyrics and score, Cecil Beaton décor and Minnelli at his most consciously decorative. Always charming to look at, and sometimes to listen to. (Leslie Caron, Louis Jourdan, Maurice Chevalier, Hermione Gingold. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

*GIRL ROSEMARIE, THE (*Small*) Hard-hitting West German account of a blackmailing prostitute involved with industrialists and political corruption. Reminiscent of *Die Dreigroschenoper*, intriguing both in its social criticism and its style, but ultimately questionable. (Nadja Tiller, Peter Van Eyck; director, Rolf Thiele.)

***HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (*Gala*) Alain Resnais' experiment with time, memory and forgetfulness, in which a love affair in Hiroshima brings back a wartime love in Nevers. Lyrical film-making by a precision artist, and as obsessive as anything we are likely to see in 1960. (Emmanuele Riva, Eiji Okada.)

*HOME FROM THE HILL (*M-G-M*) Florid family saga of two generations' involved and illicit affairs in the Deep South. Biblical overtones, a feverish climax in Minnelli's latest manner, and a redeeming, natural performance by George Peppard. (Robert Mitchum, George Hamilton, Eleanor Parker. Metrocolor, CinemaScope.)

INN FOR TROUBLE (*Eros*) Peggy Mount and David Kossoff take over a remote country pub. Protracted, rough-hewn comedy based on ITV's "Larkins" series. (Director, Pennington Richards.)

***IVAN THE TERRIBLE (PART TWO: THE BOYARS' PLOT) (*Contemporary*) Eisenstein's last film; even more magnificent than Part One. (Nikolai Cherkasov, Seraphina Birman, Piotr Kodochnikov.) *Reviewed.*

JAZZ BOAT (*Columbia*) Uneasy mixture of farce, violence and bizarre characterisation in a British teenagers' musical-cum-gangster picture. (Anthony Newley, Anne Aubrey, Lionel Jeffries; director, Ken Hughes. CinemaScope.)

*MAN OF STRAW—THE SEDUCER (*Mayfair*) Pietro Germi's story of and performance as a happily married man who has a tragic affair with a young girl. Patchy, drawn-out, strained in its dramatics, but on balance the feeling for working-class life and atmosphere wins. (Franca Bettoja, Saro Urzì, Luisa Della Noce.)

MARIE-OCTOBRE (*Mondial*) Nine men and Danielle Darrieux debating incessantly in a Wakhévitch library on the unknown traitor in their midst who betrayed their Resistance Chief to the Gestapo 15 years ago. Singularly uninspired. (Serge Reggiani, Paul Meurisse, Bernard Blier; director, Julien Duvivier.)

NEVER TAKE SWEETS FROM A STRANGER (*Columbia*) Nasty old gentleman protected by corruption in a small Canadian township proceeds to rape and child-murder. A tricky enough subject further handicapped by skimpy writing and undisciplined performance. (Felix Aylmer, Patrick Allen, Gwen Watford; director, Cyril Frankel. MegaScope.)

*ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING! (*Columbia*) Harry Kurnitz's Broadway comedy about a terrible-tempered conductor sacrifices wit and intimacy in Stanley Donen's lavish screen version, but a last look at the late Kay Kendall, a satirist with a dash of genius, makes up for some of the deficiencies. (Yul Brynner, Geoffrey Toone. Technicolor, Cinedon.) *Reviewed.*

**OUR MAN IN HAVANA (*Columbia*) Carol Reed's latest, scripted by Graham Greene from his novel; distinguished, but not quite quick or flexible enough. Stylish performance by Noël Coward as a breezily incompetent spy. (Alec Guinness, Burl Ives, Ernie Kovacs, Maureen O'Hara. CinemaScope.)

***QUATRE CENTS COUPS, LES (*Curzon*) The story of a runaway delinquent boy is turned by François Truffaut into the sort of broad social indictment that has one reaching instinctively for comparisons with Vigo. (Jean-Pierre Léaud, Guy Decomble, Claire Maurier, Albert Rémy. Dyaliscope.) *Reviewed.*

*ROYAL BALLET, THE (*Rank*) Paul Czinner's record, shot on the stage of the Royal Opera House, of *Swan Lake* (Act Two), *The Firebird* and *Ondine*. In some ways an improvement on his Bolshoi film, but let down by *Ondine's* libretto. (Eastman Colour.)

*SEVEN THIEVES (*Fox*) Initially static, finally sentimental, this well-acted account of the planning and successful execution of a raid on the vaults of Monte Carlo's casino is nevertheless Henry Hathaway's most suspenseful, civilised entertainment in years. (Rod Steiger, Edward G. Robinson, Eli Wallach, Joan Collins. CinemaScope.)

SINK THE BISMARCK! (*Fox*) Reticent officers, cheerfully facetious ratings, champagne-swilling Nazis, a sex-on-ice Wren; to quote, like the film, an Ed Murrow broadcast, "The lights are burning late in the Admiralty tonight." (Kenneth More, Dana Wynter, Carl Mohner; director, Lewis Gilbert. CinemaScope.) *Reviewed.*

SOLOMON AND SHEBA (*United Artists*) A light-heartedly incongruous distortion of Biblical history, less brutal than most but just as dull. (Yul Brynner, Gina Lollobrigida, George Sanders; director, King Vidor. Technicolor, Super Technirama 70.)

SOUTH PACIFIC (*Fox*) High, wide and generally unhandsome version of the stage musical, stodgily directed by Joshua Logan. Happily the songs survive a welter of eccentric colour effects and jungle décor. (Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor, John Kerr. Technicolor, Todd-AO.)

SOUTH SEAS ADVENTURE (*Cinerama*) Two girls voyage from Los Angeles to Honolulu, taking in surf-riding, Tahiti, Queen Salote's tortoise, Fiji, manhood initiation rites in the New Hebrides, Maoris and Bondi Beach lifeguards. One or two pretty views barely compensate for the sense of strain. (Commentary by Orson Welles: various directors. Technicolor, Cinerama.)

SUMMER OF THE SEVENTEENTH DOLL (*United Artists*) Hecht-Hill-Lancaster's film of Ray Lawler's play, made on location in Australia, retains the irony and springy writing of the original and gets a brave performance from Anne Baxter; the overall effect, though, is thin-blooded and uncertain. (Ernest Borgnine, John Mills, Angela Lansbury; director, Leslie Norman.) *Reviewed.*

*WHITE WILDERNESS (*Disney*) Probably the best *True Life Adventure* since *African Lion*. Familiar production tricks, piercing views of North America's polar zone, unique close-ups of lemmings, wolverines and a phalarope sucking food from a whirlpool. (Director, James Algar. Technicolor.)

WOMAN LIKE SATAN, A (*United Artists*) Julien Duvivier's notorious addiction to re-makes leads him irrevocably astray in this tasteless adaptation of Pierre Loüys' *La Femme et le Pantin*, last filmed, elegantly, by von Sternberg in 1935. (Brigitte Bardot, Antonio Vilar, Michel Roux. Eastman Colour, DyaliScope.)

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